■ ENTERTAINMENT/A2-1 ■ METRO/A16

Jennifer Aniston to PDI: It's been a tough year but I wouldn't change a thing

Metro police director Vidal Querol sacks Novaliches police chief for 'jueteng'

Do you have a story to tell about Edsa I? The Inquirer is looking for those untold stories, photos, text that contributed, no matter how small, to the first People Power in 1986 that so stunned the world and inspired and emboldened people in chains everywhere to break free. The contributions that will be selected by the editors will be used for the Inquirer's special celebration of the 20th anniversary of Edsa I. Send your contribution, with your address and contact number, not later than Feb. 15 to kidsmail@inquirer.com.ph

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Largest US pension fund upgrades RP invest rating

THE PHILIPPINES POSTED ITS HIGHEST SCORE ever in the annual assessment of investment destinations by CalPERS, the largest US pension fund and a recognized global leader in the investment industry, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) reported yesterday.

The country placed 14th, up from last year's 18th place ranking, in a field of 27 countries that were ranked by CalPERS (California Public Em-

LARGEST, A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, February 3, 2006 ★★ 9 sections | Vol. 21 | No. 57 P18 www.inq7.net

Massive oil spill threatens white Boracay beaches

PRIMITIVE WAY of cleaning up heavy crude oil is expected to last for three months manually done by 250 workers. So far, 17,800 sacks of contaminated materials have been collected. Magocor cites lack of equipment and personnel for the delay.

By Philip C. Taboza

A MASSIVE OIL SPILL CAUSED by a National Power Corp. barge last December is threatening the world-famous Boracay island resort, senators said yesterday.

Senators Edgardo Angara and Miriam Defensor-Santiago called on Napocor to speed up its cleanup of the oil spill, saying that it had been more than a month since leaking fuel spilled from a Napocor power barge on Dec. 19.

Angara said the spill occurred only 10 km from Boracay.

"[S]cientists say that there is a possibility that it might have long-term adverse consequences on Boracay waters," Santiago said.

"Napocor should speed up the cleanup of the oil spill and compensate those who were affected,"

MASSIVE, A14

SCANDAL IN PARADISE: The talk of Panay island is what is considered the country's largest oil spill ever. A Napocor barge spilled reportedly 195,000 liters of bunker fuel last Dec. 18 off the shores of Semirara, only 10 km from the white beaches of Boracay.

30% kickback for solons

AFP grills 5 Faeldon supporters

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE MILITARY'S INTERNAL SPY unit has mounted a crackdown against suspected supporters of Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, eyeing soldiers involved in the failed July 27, 2003, Oakwood mutiny.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Counter-Intelligence Group (Afpcig) is interrogating five soldiers suspected of having helped the "Magdalo" leader recruit military troops in a show of defiance during the 44 days he was on the loose.

Faeldon escaped last December after a hearing of the mutineers' case at a Makati city court. He was recaptured last Friday. Arrested with Faeldon was Capt. Gerardinito Rivas, who was the spokesperson of the mutiny court-martial.

More soldiers are set to be brought in for "debriefing," said Col. Tristan Kison, a military spokesperson.

"We're looking at the extent of

AFP, A14

CONFESSED broker of agri funds Jose Barredo details who got what, how and what for.

GOOD TO LAST CENTAVO: Farmers at the Senate hearing donate to the reward money put up by Sen. Ramon Magsaysay for any info leading to the arrest of Bolante.

Fertilizer fund scam detailed in Senate

By TJ Burgonio

A BROKER FOR A VIRtually unknown medical supplier yesterday exposed an alleged conspiracy between Department of Agriculture officials and local politicians to skim off the DA fund for liquid fertilizer.

Testifying at the Senate inquiry into the P728-million fertilizer fund scam, Jose Barredo Jr. said he met with congressmen, governors and mayors in their homes to persuade them to avail themselves of the DA fund by dangling an offer—a 30-percent commission.

The fertilizer fund was said to have been used to ensure the victory of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 2004 elections.

In a close-tailed testimony, Barredo outlined all the names of the officials who allegedly took hefty commissions and even dictated the amounts they should receive.

He said that at times, he personally delivered to some of them the commissions and the liquid fertilizer, some of which was diluted and overpriced.

The officials mentioned by Barredo included Representatives Monico Puentevella (Ba-

30% KICKBACK, A14

SC nullifies Meralco's 13.27¢/kWh hike in '04

By Armando N. Nocum

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERday declared null and void the 13.27 centavos per kilowatt-hour increase in generation charge that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) granted Manila Electric Co. in 2004 because the company did not notify consumers about the rate increase.

The high court also ordered that the ERC decision approving the increase in Meralco's rate from P3.1858 per kWh to P5.3213 per kWh be "immediately" set aside "for having been issued with grave abuse of discretion."

The decision was silent on whether Meralco customers would get a refund.

The ruling penned by Associate Justice Romeo Callejo was approved unanimously by all 14 justices, with Associate Justice Dante Tinga filing a separate concurring opinion on the case.

The tribunal ruled against the ERC and Meralco for their failure to publish Meralco's application for a rate increase in newspapers of general circulation.

"The lack of publication of respondent Meralco's amended application for the increase of its generation charge is ... fatal. By this omission, the consumers were deprived of the right to file their comments thereon," the high court said.

The Supreme Court said due process required "that the consumers be notified of any applications, and be apprised of its contents, that would result in compounding their economic burden."

SC NULLIFIES, A14

Antipregnancy pill making a comeback

By Christine V. Esguerra

APPARENTLY TAKING ADVANtage of the scheduled pullout of foreign-donated family planning products next year, the manufacturer of an old, plant-based antipregnancy pill is making a comeback in the Philippine market.

And it's a pill that will not only prevent unwanted pregnancies but also relieve menstrual pain and cure acne, according to the manufacturer.

Desogestrel, whose main ingredient is derived from the roots of a Mexican wild yam, is targeted at the female population (48.1 percent) that, according to the National Demographic and

ANTIPREGNANCY, A2

REENGAGING A POWERHOUSE

RP rolling out red carpet for Indian president

By Leticia Ramos-Shahani

(Editor's Note: The author, a senator for three terms, was chair of the Senate committee on foreign relations. Before her election to the Senate, she was United Nations assistant secretary general for social development and humanitarian affairs. She also served at various times as Philippine ambassador to Australia, Romania, Hungary and West Germany. She is the widow of Senate President Jovito Salonga, author and professor.)

COMMENTARY

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT is rolling out the red carpet today for a distinguished figure in the world political stage—Indian President Abdul Kalam. A heroic space scientist, nationalist, Muslim, inspirator to young minds, vegetarian and celibate, Kalam is visiting the country upon the invitation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In 1998, Kalam said: "India has stood too long in the line of developing countries." Along with other Indian leaders, Kalam has predicted that India will join the ranks of developed countries by

RP ROLLING OUT, A4

Soon on sale: 1-kg LPG with built-in burner

By Abigail L. Ho

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF THE P30, P60 and P115 cell phone loads, households may soon be able to buy liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for roughly the same amounts.

Riding on the popularity of sachet marketing, the Department of Energy (DOE) is urging liquefied petroleum gas suppliers to offer cooking gas in sachets with capacities of as little as 1 kilogram.

The 1-kg LPG sachs will be similar to the 2.5- and 2.7-kg tanks that are already available in the market.

Two firms—DJ Safe Gas and Petrotech Asia Pacific Inc.—have expressed their intention to offer 1-kg LPG tanks, which will likely be priced at a little more than P68, said Zenaida Monsada, DOE oil industry management bureau director.

Unlike the conventional 11-kg cylinders that are connected to gas ranges via a hose, the 1-kg cylinders

SOON, A14

WEATHER FORECAST

PERSIST: Red Cagayan will see flood—but all calming assurances. "As one of Northern Luzon Province and Batanes will have cloudy skies with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms, while other parts of the country are [illegible]. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with scattered [illegible]

Second FRONTPAGE

Cartel blamed for high sugar prices

By Gil Cabacungan

AN ALARMED MALACAÑANG IS MOVING TO BREAK WHAT IT believes is an emerging cartel in the sugar industry taking advantage of global shortage to push up prices.

"We believe the surge in sugar prices is artificial and driven by hoarders belonging to a new cartel," Agriculture Secretary Domingo Panganiban disclosed yesterday. "We see a lot of little stocks for local sugar stocks but we never saw them sold in protest."

Panganiban said there was no cause for the price of sugar to "spike up" in recent days because there are sufficient supply in the market. He did not identify the members of the alleged cartel.

Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila confirmed one of the steps the administration has taken to break the group's stranglehold on sugar supplies.

He said that Sugar Regulatory Administration head Jesus Ledesma had agreed to open up the building of local sugar to small planters that have been shut out by the "big boys" who manoeuvre to control the market with their bulk purchases of 10,000 bags for big traders.

Favila said the SRA would purchase its 50-kilo bags. From an average of P700 per bag last year, the price of sugar has ballooned by 40 percent to roughly P1,400 per bag last week.

"We will try to eliminate this discriminatory bidding which Ledesma admitted to me to the extent of the buyers and buyer of margins and spread by consensus and eliminate interest in bringing sugar to consumers," said Favila.

He also said that allowing small players who cannot bid for at least 10 bags should somewhat balance the big boys.

"A small trader told me all the bags he bought were effectively refloated and snapped up in the market at modest margins," Favila said. "With that big money, the big boys can control the market and induce a shortage even when there is none."

Expanding the number of bidders in the sugar auction complements the importation of 50,000 metric tons of duty free sugar approved by President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to Favila.

"We expect to smoke out the hoarded supply with these imports," said Favila.

Businessmen and consumer advocate Raul T. Concepcion urged the government to right on up-monitoring of the market, warning that sugar prices could prove to be as volatile as prices of crude oil.

Concepcion also said several reasons were behind the global squeeze on sugar supply.

He said Europe had cut subsidies on its sugar exports, earmarked all sugar and corn exports for the production of ethanol (a fuel alternative) and limited sugar production for its domestic requirements.

In addition, he said, Turkey had reduced the land area devoted to the planting of sugar and corn; US President George W. Bush had announced that he planned to allocate a large portion of corn produced in the United States to the making of ethanol; and Thailand planned to cut exports because of drought.

Concepcion noted that there had already up the world market price of sugar from 14 US cents per pound (equivalent to P1,000 per 50-kg bag at daily free rates) at the start of this year to 18 cents per pound (or P 1,300 per 50-kg).

However, the Department of Agriculture has reported that as of Jan. 30, the country was producing raw sugar at the rate of 94,245 metric tons a week, which was more than twice consumption of 41,250 metric tons a week.

Army 'butcher' savors Reds' supreme 'compliment'

By Cecil Morella
Agence France-Presse

FILIPINAN

LIKE A SNIPER TRACKING A TARget, the unsentimental Philippine army general scans the communist guerrilla newspaper and smiles in quiet satisfaction when he reads it on page three.

Maj. Gen. Arnulfo Pulparcon," the faction's editorial cranked. "Death Squads and vigilante groups...gruesome murders."

To the 53-year-old general, being singled out by the New People's army (NPA) publication "Ang Bayan" (The People) is a supreme compliment.

The 29-year-old insurgency, he says, is "more of a psychological war. The military effort is almost 20-30 percent only."

Pulparcon is one of the military's brightest stars in the battle. After attending communist shadow government in Samar and Mindoro, the slight, wiry father of three with an intense, willowing stare was sent last year to lead the 7th Infantry Division in the Central Luzon plains, birthplace of the Huk rebellion.

But Pulparcon, who studied to become a lawyer before entering a di-

vast commission into the military after more 335 years ago, has also drawn condemnation from human rights monitors who invariably call him a "butcher." Such allegations do no part with Pulparcon, an unconquering general who believes tough tactics would yield a quick victory.

"In the 80,000-square-km NPA, "one in two years is more than enough, because the enemy is our strong," he told AFP in an interview.

"Our forces and the resources are more than enough if they are utilized properly," he said, stressing that President Macapagal-Arroyo's government must have the will, and the public be prepared to accept "collateral damage" because all-out offensive.

The government must "confront them in the battle fields," he said. "If we are better than us on the propaganda front... "We have to concentrate on combating the intelligence work of the enemy and enforcing their support system."

To the general, the insurgency is directed by its top chief or political bureau that have gained 13 seats in the 235-seat House of Representatives (though the so-called "party-list" system has some in-effect in 2001.

"It is my belief that these members of party-list in Congress are actually the ones who are directing the [illegible] movement," he says.

Pulparcon says the rebel network also includes hundreds—possibly thousands—of ostensibly legal "non-government organizations" (NGOs) infiltrated or directed by the NPA's senior leadership, the Communist Party of the Philippines, that "provides the materials, the student" for the NPA.

"We need to strengthen our legal offensive" against this network, he says, while warning that an effective counter-insurgency campaign will necessarily be secret "there would be things that would hurt our people."

Noli: I don't owe MGB crew anything

By Cynthia D. Balana
and Michael Lim Ubac

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO said yesterday he was urbat he is today because of his long years of government service, hard work and public service—and his voice.

De Castro was reacting to the statements made by former employees of Bayan Productions, which had produced the Magsasalang Kuliti Bayan news magazine that made De Castro a media star and a household name.

The employees filed a case against Bayan Productions, which is headed by De Castro's wife Arlene, for alleged nonpayment of salaries and other benefits after Magsasalang Kuliti Bayan folded up in December when its contract was not renewed by the ABS-CBN television network over which it had aired for 18 years.

"What do they mean that I owe me for them? I owed not to here, that they pay the awards in my records? I edited the scripts because if I [illegible] what they mean, MGB might see how cruel," De Castro told the hacienda in Filipino yesterday.

"I was very busy because they were paid to [illegible] me. Why should they get mad at me for the fate of MGB when it did not belong to me but was registered under ABS-CBN. Everything must come to an end. He should be granted MGB listed 10 years," he said.

De Castro said he had already made a name for himself as a co-anchor on TV Patrol and as host of the "Kabayan" radio program on dzBM before he went on MGB.

"TV Patrol had higher ratings than MGB, which some days, how could there not be that I owe them what I am now?" he said.

De Castro stressed that all MGB employees, including himself, were only talents of MGB and were paid on a per-program basis.

He said MGB's budget had come from ABS-CBN through Bayan Productions every week and the MGB talents received their talent fees twice a month.

He said he was never a regular employee of ABS-CBN except when he was made vice president for radio two years before he ran for senator.

"When I became VP for radio, that was the only time I became a regular employee but that was only for two years. They did not take away my talent fee after that but when I became a senator I [illegible] that," he said.

De Castro said that his wife had been negotiating with ABS-CBN to retain the MGB staff, but since the disgruntled employees included of the owners and officials of the network as respondents in the case, this was now impossible.

On the one hand, they claim that they were regular employees because they made contributions to the Social Security System and Pag-Ibig Fund. And they received a regular rice subsidy. De Castro said these all came from Bayan Productions, not ABS-CBN.

"Having SSS and Pag-Ibig does not make you a regular employee. They should be grateful to us for paying for that, including their rice. They were the stars of other networks. Sometimes they had such benefits even if they were only talents. They said they had to sell the appliances we gave them last Christmas. Well, those were gifts. It's a good thing they were able to turn them into cash. I was really hurt because some of them were my godchildren," he said.

Legal agency vs mutineers

PROMPTED BY THE LARGE NUmbers of some junior officers who are on trial for the Oakwood mutiny, President Macapagal-Arroyo has created a new legal action group that will help coordinate the investigation and prosecution of cases relating to national security.

The President signed last Jan. 17 Executive Order 493 creating the Inter-agency Legal Action Group (ILAG) and gave it accredited briefings of P56 million.

The ILAG is to address specific offenses "that constitute threats to national security, including but not limited to cases of rebellion, sedition and violent offenses."

It will also cover "national interest cases that threaten national security."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the president of funds would help the expeditious prosecution of the cases.

"We are giving the agency involved in prosecuting these cases the wherewithal to be able to successfully prosecute these cases," he said.

He said the new agency "should not be misunderstood to go witch-hunting for evidence against anybody or the opposition who are trying to destabilize the government." (Jerome Aba-ladon)

Davide backs poll automation — Abalos

By Jerome Aning

RETIRED SUPREME COURT Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. last yesterday with top officials of the Commission on Elections in his new capacity as presidential adviser on electoral reforms, and vowed to support the agency's efforts to automate the 2007 national elections, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said.

"He asked a lot of questions and he sent very relevant queries," Abalos told reporters.

He said the meeting, which lasted about two-and-a-half hours, focused on the automation of more than 9 million ballots mandated by Republic Act No. 8436.

Abalos said he and his colleagues looked forward to meeting with Davide more frequently so that he could act as Comelec's conduit with Malacañang and Congress.

Commissioners Resurreccion Borra, Florentino Tuason Jr. and Romeo Brawner attended the meeting. Comelec has been ordered to fine members following the expiration yesterday of the seven-year terms of Commissioners Mehol Sadain and Rufino Javier.

Abalos said he intervened to Davide Comelec's determination to pursue "all possible avenues" to secure authorization to use the automated counting machines it had purchased for the 2004 national and local elections.

The P1.3-billion deal was annulled by the Supreme Court two years ago due to bidding irregularities. Davide, who was then the chief justice, dissented from the majority decision, saying that there was no suggestion that graft and fraud attended the bidding process or that the contract price was excessive or unreasonable.

Abalos said Davide supported his "full support" for the Comelec's automation plan to secure the 2007 elections as mandated by law, but advised that alternative plans should also be drawn up.

One of the alternatives discussed at the meeting were the manual elections in the aftermath of the 2005 election as mandated by law, but advised that alternative plans should also be drawn up.

"The machines are very exhaustively designed and built, as well as easy to operate," Abalos said. "Their simplicity would probably decrease the time needed to prepare for their introduction into the Philippine electoral system."

No reason to quit, says PCGG chief

By Alexis Pupa

AN ASSERTIVE PRESIDENTIAL COMMission on Good Government (PCGG) chair Camilo Sabio yesterday brushed aside calls for his resignation, after he had ruled some senators by refusing to answer questions on a reported compromise on the current levy fund.

Sabio said he was simply following President Macapagal-Arroyo's marching orders with regard to the 2005 levy fund, which was to make sure the law was followed and that whatever deal was hammered out was not disadvantageous to the government.

"There is no reason to resign," said Sabio, when asked his reaction to the call made by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, among others legislators.

Sabio had earlier said that if nothing happened with the 2005 levy case by the end of the year, he would resign from the PCGG.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, however, said the other day that Sabio was acting on his own when he began negotiations on a compromise between the excouri farmers and businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

At stake is 20 percent of Jose Miguel Corp., the country's largest food and beverage conglomerate, which Cojuangco and the farmers are contesting.

When asked if he left Malacañang had left him intending to the wind with Ermita's statement, Sabio cryptically answered in a text message. "I am deeply grateful for the trust the President has given me."

When pressed if the Palace had instructed him to negotiate a compromise, Sabio sent another text: "I have repeatedly said I have not yet seen any compromise agreement."

Early this week, Sabio refused to answer questions posed by Senators Enrile and Joker Arroyo on whether or not Malacañang had approved negotiations on a compromise on the 2005 levy, and other questions related to some PCGG-sequestered companies.

Sabio invoked Executive Order No. 1 issued by President Corazon Aquino in 1986 which created the PCGG. Section 4 of the EO says no PCGG official would be required to testify in any judicial, legislative or administrative proceeding concerning matters within its "official supervision."

On Wednesday, Sabio said one reason for his refusal to answer the senators' questions was the earlier involvement of former President Fidel Ramos and Senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Ramon Revilla in multilateral talks in the 2005 levy issue.

Others said Sabio was using "legal tactics" when he brought up the senators' involvement in the 2005 levy fund issue as lawyers during the Marcos administration.

For his part, drawn said Sabio should resign his position as chair or officer in charge of 10 government-sequestered corporations, 14 of them formerly controlled by Cojuangco, since these pairs were in conflict with his job as PCGG.

"It is downright untenable and deplorable. As PCGG chair, he is pursuing these sequestered corporations for 20 years ourselves. He, he chairs the same sequestered corporations that he is going after," Arroyo said.

"How can he live with that arrangement? Of being the accuser as PCGG chair and defender as the sequestered corporation chair? By hanging on to these like nails, he erodes the credibility of the PCGG," he said. With Philip C. Tubeza

Misuari wants case remanded to DOJ for probe

By Tarra T. Quismundo

JAENIC DEL CARLOS FMG LONG SERN HOMES DEL precon, the lawyer of jailed Moro rebel leader Nur Misuari and seven of his alleged accomplices has asked a Makati court to suspend their trial and remand the rebellion case to the Department of Justice for preliminary investigation.

In a motion filed last Wednesday, lawyer Arthur Lim told the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 that Misuari and his co-accused were "entering their 30th year of incarceration pending trial without benefit of a preliminary investigation... thereby denying them their basic right which, though not a constitutional right by nature, is nonetheless a component of due process in criminal justice."

Misuari and co-accused Datuk Abubakin Usman are currently in the St. Luke's Medical Center, where the court allowed them to undergo through medical examinations. They were released last Saturday from Fort Bonifacings in Sta. Rosa, Laguna for a 10-day medical furlough.

In his motion, Lim said that a reinvestigation ordered two years ago by then Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong never pushed through. He said a reinvestigation would allow his clients to submit counter-affidavit to the rebellion charges.

On Oct. 2, 2003, Datumanong issued a resolution ordering a reinvestigation of the rebellion charge, which arose from an uprising in Jolo in 2001 in which about 100 people were killed.

"Regrettably, the resolution has not been implemented despite the fact that the same has not been stayed, appealed, nor nullified [by the Court], and remains valid up to this time," said Lim.

State Prosecutor Oliver Cruz opposed the motion and asked the court yesterday to deny the petition "for not only being dilatory, but for utter lack of merit."

"When the resolution of then Secretary Datumanong was issued, the case was already on trial. Thus, [Datumanong's] order for reinvestigation of this case after the accused have been arraigned, [while] the pre-trial terminated, was unprecedented," said Cruz.

Erap eye surgery a 'success'

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DOCTORS HAVE PRONOUNCED DEPOSED President Estrada's eye surgery "successful" but said he has to remain in hospital for three more days so they can "monitor his recovery".

"We are hoping everything that he will be allowed to stay in the hospital for a few more days. We hope the Sandiganbayan will be more compassionate and more humane," said San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, son of Estrada's sister.

The Sandiganbayan anti-graft court allowed Estrada, who is under "rest house arrest" on plunder charges, to check into the San Juan Medical Center for treatment last Tuesday after he complained of blurred vision and headaches.

He doctors said he was suffering from an eye infection caused by an insect bite. But he also needed surgery to remove excess eyelid skin that was affecting his vision, they said.

His family decided to push through with the surgery the other night.

"We decided on our own to go on with the operation with or without a court order. Premature Estrada's health is at stake here. We hope the Sandiganbayan will understand," Ejercito said.

The surgery lasted more than two hours, from 10 p.m. of Wednesday to 12:15 a.m. yesterday.

Estrada was conscious during the surgery and was only just slightly sedated, said his personal physician, Dr. Lourdes Herrera.

"The operation was very successful. He is now recovering well," Herrera said.

He said Estrada was already "in high spirits" yesterday and was even planning to "offer a thanksgiving Mass."

Aside from treating the infection in his right eye, the doctors also removed the excess skin in both eyelids.

They also found cysts in the lower lid of his left eye but they chose not to remove them to avoid risking more infection.

Largest US pension fund . . .

Frompage A1

pleans' Retirement System) to its 2006 Permissible Markets List, the DBS said, quoting a report from the Philippine Embassy in Washington.

Its latest score of 2.15—from last year's 2.00—given by CalPERS' consulting firm Wilshire Associates, improved the country's standing compared with other emerging markets, particularly Malaysia, China, Russia and India, according to Ambassador Albert del Rosario.

Investments in SMC, PLDT

Last year, CalPERS had $172.68 billion in assets, of which an estimated $65 million was invested in Philippine companies like San Miguel Corp. and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

It had approximately $5.3 billion invested in emerging markets as of February 2005. The pension fund provides retirement and health benefits to 1.4 million state and local public employees and their families in California.

Del Rosario attributed the country's "remarkable performance" to the reduction in its fiscal deficit, the passage and implementation of the expanded value-added tax law, and "advances in the country's battle against corruption."

Brownie points & GMA

The diplomat said CalPERS' decision "reflects strong confidence in the Philippines and in the reform drive of the government."

But he was also quick to mention all those two political brownie points for the embattled Arroyo administration.

"[That] is a clear indication that the international business community recognizes the President's economic reform efforts and the administration made inroads this end," Del Rosario said in the DBS statement.

The economy continues to make significant strides under Mrs. Arroyo's leadership "despite severe political controversies."

"The year was the best performing currency in 2005 [in Asia]. Foreign investment in the Philippines has remained robust. Our equities market was the best performer in Southeast Asia. Our inflation is still single digit despite soaring oil prices," Del Rosario underscored.

Inkl Contreras

RP rolling out red carpet for Indian president

Frompage A1

2020. Not an idiotic dget but a steady dephant, India has emerged as one of the world's top 10 economies, which is touted to become the third largest in 50 years, the first one being China.

Filipinos will have to shake off fears, justifiably the stereotype they have of Indians. Head of the "Bombayer," the local catchall term for Indians. Filipinos know them as swanky guards and ambulant vendors of mosquito nets during pre-war Manila. More recently, Indians have become known as notorious moneylenders who have positioned themselves in all corners of the archipelago.

But India should also cast aside its Cold War hang-up about the Philippines as a prominent US colony, excluded from India's "Western neighbors" in Southeast Asia. India used to dismiss Swan as a "Coca-Cola Club" but now assiduously seems to be part of the regional grouping.

India is becoming a global knowledge hub with a central place in the transnational movements of knowledge and services. It is also a magnet for foreign investors in the field of IT and manufacturing as well as biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. The viability of its 1.2 billion people—half of which is below 35—lies in the fact that 60 percent of them are literate, many of them English-speaking.

Is the Philippines ready to reengage this powerhouse?

Delicious food

Recent by Former President Fidel V. Ramos headed a trade delegation to Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi. Members of the delegation were interested in information technology, educational exchange, pharmaceuticals, films, jewelry and herbal medicines. They were enthusiastic about the wide range of contacts they made and the ease communication with Indians, who speak English. Trade and investment between the Philippines and India, however, remains below potential.

A member of the Ramos delegation said he found Indian food just too spicy even at five-star hotels. He ended up eating at McDonald's. But Indian food can be delicious and does not always have to be hot. Larry Cruz, Filipino owner of Bollywood Restaurant in Makati, has proven this.

In Mumbai, the focal point of the Ramos visit was the Birla group which made the first major Indian investment in the Philippines in 1976. The late Aditya Birla, a visionary industrialist, served as honorary consul of the Philippines in Mumbai and his widow Rajashri Birla has taken over the position.

Language bond

The Birlas have generously helped the Philippines in countless matters over the years, a fact acknowledged by the Philippine government which conferred the Legion of Honor award, normally given to ambassadors, to the late K. Birla.

The English language is another bond that Filipinos share with Indians. A great number of modern Indians and Filipinos are able to communicate in a way other Asians can't. It is the new millenium nonresident Indians (NRIs) in the United States who have helped build Silicon Valley and made America's IT industry reach new heights. The NRIs play a role in forging closer relations between India and the United States.

Filipinos and Indians are discovering each other in the field of services resulting in information technology. Some Indian companies have already set up call centers in the Philippines. Another area of collaboration is in the "nonvoice" business processing outsourcing, which deals with such medical, legal, financial, banking and accounting services.

Significantly, Filipino animators have found work in Bangalore. But Filipinos must work hard at keeping educational standards high, especially in the engineering and scientific fields.

Filipinos' proficiency in English must be world-class. Unnecessary and meddlesome should rule; corruption and political patronage must be rooted out if Filipinos are to survive and go beyond becoming domestic helpers in the IT sector for we must also create software.

Asia's 2 oldest democracies

But Philippine relations with India are not based solely on commercial considerations, however important these are. The Philippines and India are the two oldest post-colonial democracies in Asia. However imperfect their systems might be, the fact that the Philippines and India have democratic institutions in place is an important bond in a region where freedom, justice and human dignity are rarer food for economic gains.

One of the most encouraging features of people-to-people contact between our two countries is the rich dialogue and interaction on change between Indian and Filipino NGOs in diverse areas such as environment issues, women's rights and spiritual retreat.

Nuclear power

If a country develops economic power, its military might also grows. India is a military and nuclear power. When the military issue is raised with Indian friends, they readily answer that India is a peace-loving and, like in ancient times, will not seek to subjugate its neighbors.

However, as American free and Stephen Cohen have said in their writings, the nuclear debate is a real one in India. There are those who see India's nuclear capability as a needed deterrence to threats; others see it as a futile exercise in the search for security.

Nuclear weapons on the Indian subcontinent are far away from where we are in the Pacific. Here we, Filipinos whose history has been one of invasion, conquest and occupation by stronger military powers, hope that India will live in peace with its neighbors and share prosperity equitably.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, February 3, 2006
4th Week in Ordinary Time
Black / Ampas

1st Reading: Sir 47:2-11
Gospel: Mark 6:14-29

King Herod also heard about Jesus because his name had become well-known. Some people said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others thought, "He is Elijah," and others, "He is a prophet like the prophets of times past." When Herod was told of this, he thought: "I had John beheaded, yet he has risen from the dead!"

For this is what had happened. Herod had ordered John to be arrested and had him bound and put in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Herod had married her, and John had told him, "It is not right for you to live with your brother's wife." So Herodias held a grudge against John and wanted to kill him, but she could not because Herod feared him. Aware that John was a righteous and holy man, Herod protected him, and he liked listening to him, although he became very disturbed whenever he heard him.

Herodias had her chance on Herod's birthday when he gave a dinner for all the senior government officials, military chiefs and the leaders of Galilee. On that occasion the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, and she delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want and I will give it to you." And he went on: for an oath, "I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom." She went out to consult her mother, "What shall I ask for?" she said. The mother replied, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried to the king and made her request: "I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist, here and now, on a dish."

The king was very displeased, but he would not refuse in front of his guests because of his oaths. So he sent one of the bodyguards with instructions to bring John's head. He went and beheaded John in prison, then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl. And the girl gave it to her mother. When John's disciples heard of this, they came and took his body and buried it.

Commentary:

The stories of Herod are sung, telling both of his sins (chapters and his promise of God. And in Mark we hear the story of John the Baptist imprisoned for telling the truth to Herod and how Philip's wife, Herodias plots to still him because he accused them of murder and unfaithfulness. And she waits for the chance and that John beheaded at a dinner party. How Herod succumbed to the whims of his wife and the prophecies of old like Elijah and John the Baptist, with the people wondering who Jesus might actually be.

Who are the prophets among us? Are we brave and bold, and seek the Word of the Lord in those who speak out against injustice?

(Servants Publications, Inc., 4 Maryknoll St., SP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP PO Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City, Tel. 921-3084, Fax 921-7429, E-mail: sp@skyinet.org, Website: http://www.bible.ph/servants/ (Servants Publications Inc.) at http://missionvita.com/ (Christians in the Philippines)

Filipino seamen losing out to automation, competition

GREATER AUTOMATION ABOARD SHIPS and competition from Asian neighbors are cutting into demand for the Filipinos who make up 25 percent of the sailors in the global shipping industry, the International Labor Organization said yesterday.

The current shipbuilding boom has created strong demand for officers worldwide, the ILO said, but the trend toward automated vessels with smaller crews has reduced the need for lower-skilled seafarers, known as ratings.

"In today's ships become more specialized and automated, the required skills mix has changed," the ILO said in a statement. "Demand for skilled deck officers and engineers continues to rise, while slimmer crews means the need for lower skilled ratings is dropping."

A December report by the Baltic and International Maritime Council estimated a world-wide shortage of 18,000 qualified officers and a surplus of 135,000 ratings, the ILO said.

Aside from shrinking overall demand, low-skilled Filipino sailors are facing competition from Asian neighbors like China, India, Myanmar and Vietnam, just as Filipinos squeezed out their European and American counterparts in the past, the ILO said.

The labor body said the benchmark monthly wage for Filipino ratings is $1,400, while sailors from other Asian countries are accepting jobs for as low as $500 to $700.

Some ship owners also are increasingly imposing age restrictions—sometimes as low as 40 years, it said.

But the ILO-penned shipping industry and labor executives as saying many ship owners still prefer Filipino crewmen because they speak English, are Western-oriented and "flexible and have a caring attitude."

The labor body said it is now crafting a new Maritime Labor Convention to reflect the needs of a globalized shipping industry. If adopted, it will consolidate and update more than 65 international labor standards. AP

Appeals court asked to clear backlog of cases

By Armand N. Nocum

THE NEW PRESIDING JUSTICE OF THE Court of Appeals, Ruben T. Reyes, has asked the CA justices to clear the backlog of cases in their ranks, saying that no real justice is attained when cases are delayed.

Reyes said he wanted to make the CA "high-moral and responsible in its decisions and resolutions, and responsible and responsive to the challenge of judicial service."

"First and foremost, we will address expeditiously the matter of eliminating the backlog in cases," Reyes said in an interview.

He said the appellate court, which receives an average of 8,000 cases a year, would be giving priority to cases that are more than a year old from the date of submission.

As of Jan. 2, he said there were only 96 cases dating back to 1999 and beyond.

Reyes said he would raise an order today that the 54 cases be decided in 60 days and after that, within the next 10 months, from March to December.

"Our target is to decide all appealed cases from 2000 in 2006," he said.

Since he himself has a "zero backlog" in his sala, Reyes said he would volunteer to work on some of the older cases.

The CA presiding justice said there were only a total of 10,000 pending cases before the appellate court, which was founded 78 years ago. He said the court has resolved 34,000 of the 13,000 new cases filed last year.

"So by December, we can easily dispatch the 10,000 (pending) cases this year so that the 13,000 to 12,000 cases that we still receive this year will all be current cases not year-to-come backlog," he said.

The court considers as backlog cases those that have remained undecided for more than one year from the date of submission.

Reyes, who was appointed in December, said CA justices have managed to reduce to an average of two years the time needed for cases to be resolved—a marked improvement from the 15 to 20 years that it used to take for CA to decide cases.

However, he foresees a drastic increase in the number of cases to be handled by the court now that the Supreme Court has thrown to the CA all appealed administrative cases filed before the Office of the Ombudsman.

"The Supreme Court declared that all these appeals or petitions for review from the Ombudsman[] should be brought to the CA first and from there to the high court," he said.

Top soldiers of '05 picked

THREE DISPLAY SOLDIERS FROM EACH OF the three branches of the armed forces and one from the technical services have been chosen The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers (TOPS) by the Metrobank Foundation, the corporate social responsibility arm of Metrobank, and its partner, the Rotary Club of Makati Metro.

Metrobank Foundation executive vice president and executive director Aniceto M. Adriquez told the 10 men selected from the Army, Navy and Air force and one from the Technical Services of the military (medical corps, the corps of professors, and Judges Advocates Group office).

The winners are Maj. Hermenio S. Insigares, Radar man Freddie E. Asenjo, Sgt. Rudy S. Ropacio, Col. Oscris Teody R. Ishii, Lt. Col. Arnulfo J. Marcos, Senior M/Sgt. Fidel A. Algue, Jr., M/Sgt. Guillermo F. Francisco, Capt. Donnel O. Espino, S/Sgt. Irwin P. Pandino and T/Sgt. Larry A. Dacuyag.

The 2005 TOPS members were selected by the final board of judges, chaired by Sen. Jaime Ferdinez, chair of the Senate committee on good government and Ombudsman Special Prosecutor Justice Dante O. Tinga, after a series of interviews held in November.

Other members of the final board of judges are former Labor Secretary Nieves R. Confesor; Ateneo University president Fr. Lydia B. Echauz; 2004 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Emergent Leadership Fely Aid Ignacio Corporation of the Asian Development Foundation Benjamin E. Abadiano and Inquirer columnist Belinda Olivares-Cunanan.

30% kickback for solons, says witness

From page A1

sood Gil), Oscar Garin Bunag, Edgar Espinosa (Guimaras) and Rolfino "Nonong" Nicolas Urdaneta, Governors Niemar Remegio (Capiz) and Florencio Mendiones (Aklan), and Kalibo Mayor Reynan Sobalo.

Some of the officials named decided to file a story at right.)

Barredo said that between January and April 2004, he worked with one Marlene "Gee" Ayroso, believed to be one of the owners of medical supplier Ferdose Philippines Inc. and an "agent" of then Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joyjoy" Bolante.

He said it was Ayroso who took care of getting the required paperwork signed, and having the necessary funds as well as the commissions released.

Identifying himself as a broker of Ferdose, Barredo said Ayroso had claimed that the DA fund was being managed by Bolante, the alleged chief architect of the fertilizer fund program.

The senate tried to serve a subpoena on Ayroso at the Ferdose office at 26 Sgt. Esguerra Ave., South Triangle, Quezon City, but found the place abandoned.

Overpricing

At the same hearing, Commission on Audit officials said the suppliers and nongovernment organizations that received a huge portion of the P728-million fund from the DA for personal distribution to farmers' groups "overpriced" the cost of the fertilizer by millions of pesos.

Sorsogon Board Member Antonio Aquino testified that the provincial government received P5 million from the DA and used it to purchase 1,000 liters of Bio Nutrire Liquid fertilizer.

BOLANTE: Have you met this man?

He said the fertilizer—sold by local suppliers at between P500 and P599 per liter—was bought at the padded cost of P1,500 per liter from Ferdose itself, and turned out to be inappropriate for rice and corn.

After the hearing, Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. told reporters: "In effect, we have further strengthened the truth that the [DA] donor to the RPG hotel had made use of the fund to commit such large-scale overpricing and kickback delivery.

"If this is not reversed, we will continue to bleed, and our farmers will continue to be impoverished."

Magsaysay, chair of the investigating committee on agriculture and food, said it was up to the COA to pick up from where the committee had left off. "The COA itself can file cases."

But the senator said he was not keen on bringing the lawmakers mentioned by Barredo. He said the House of Representatives' committee on ethics should look into the broker's claims.

'SOP'

In his testimony, the bespectacled Barredo said he consulted with Ayroso on the sale of medicines to local government units from 1997 to 2003.

He said that in January 2004, Ayroso invited him to work with her in the sale of liquid fertilizer to local officials, with the funds coming from the DA and the fertilizer to be purchased from Ferdose.

Barredo named a Juliet Gregorio as the president of Ferdose, which, he said, had overdone its Bolante and was anchored by the latter to supply fertilizer to local government units.

"She [Ayroso] told me that funds from the DA would be given to the LGUs to buy the fertilizer. According to Tess, the fund is being managed by Dir. Usec Bolante," Barredo said, evoking from a caucus affidavit.

Initially, Barredo said, he and Ayroso met with Mayors Camille and Pagdanganan of the Bulacan towns of Doña Remedios and Calumpit, respectively, and Bulacan Representative Lorenzo Tañada III to inform them they had funds ranging from P2 million to P6 million.

He said "Nicolas" also failed to accept the incentives, and decided to accept cash only.

"I learned that if the fund, for instance, was P1 million, the SOP [standard operating procedure or commission] would be P400,000 (39 percent of P1 million), and the rest would be used to buy fertilizer," he said.

For his work, Barredo said Ayroso promised him P18,000 a month, plus 1.5 percent of the commission.

Demands

After his stint in Central Luzon, Barredo, being an Ilonggo, was instructed by Ayroso to concentrate on Region 6.

There, he said, he made the same offer to officials that included Congressmen Prospero Pichay, Garin and Espinosa, Governors Bermejo and Miraflores and Mayor Sobalo.

He said Pichay, who was allotted P5 million, accepted the offer, but insisted that only 25 percent be used to buy fertilizer and the rest be converted to cash.

"Then Ayroso was with me at that time," Barredo said.

Garin, who was allocated P5 million, also received a commission equivalent to 39 percent of the fund, Barredo said. He said Espinosa got a P5-million fund and a 39-percent "SOP."

Barredo said that when he and Ayroso met with Bermejo at the Benax capitol, the governor asked about the amount of the commission and was told that he would get 39 percent.

"The governor retorted that a supplier had given a 40-percent offer, and instructed Tess to call Usec Bolante. I saw and heard Governor Bermejo and Usec Bolante talk on the phone," Barredo said, adding that he eventually delivered the first tranche of the commission to the governor.

The one who rejected offer

For Barredo's testimony:

+ He identified Pantovilla at the latter's home in Bacolod in April 2004 to prepare the memorandum of agreement, but the broker-dealer signed it only a few days later.

+ Miraflores did not sign the MOA until he received the P15-million commission a day before the May 2004 elections.

+ Sobalo did not agree to the initial offer of P600,000 in commissions and demanded more. The additional money was delivered.

+ Iloilo Rep. Arthur Defensor did not accept his allocation from the DA but requested that this be distributed to Mayors Alex Contreras of Calinog, Mayor Mario Mabanta of Estancia and Mayor Ramirez of Lambunao.

"Before the elections, we also met with Congressman Locsin, Congressman Mariano and Governor Montano, but the release of their allocations did not push through after they switched sides and supported FPJ (Fernando Poe Jr., standard-bearer of the opposition)," Barredo said.

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'Black propaganda,' says governor

"BLACK PROPAGANDA" WAS HOW Capiz Gov. Victoras Bermejo described the testimony of his fellow Capizeño Jose Barredo Jr. that he had received a P15-million commission for the delivery of liquid fertilizer to his province.

Bermejo said he was ready to face the Senate if given a chance in order to clear his name. "We have supporting documents to prove that [the fertilizer] was distributed to farmers in Capiz, and [it] corresponds to P15 [million] in stuff] to get that [the project] was properly implemented," Bermejo said in a statement e-mailed to the Inquirer yesterday.

The governor also belied allegations that the project was used for the 2004 election campaign, saying it was implemented in July 2004, or two months after the polls.

Former Aklan governor and now Rep. Florencio Miraflores also denied Barredo's allegation that he had received a P15-million commission.

"I'm really surprised that my name has been dragged into that controversy," he said in a phone interview.

Miraflores said he neither knew nor had heard of Barredo.

He said that while Aklan was a recipient of a fertilizer fund of P5 million, the project was implemented only in September 2004, when he was already a congressman.

In a separate phone interview, Kalibo Mayor Reynan Sobalo also denied knowing Barredo.

"That is laughable. I do not recall knowing Barredo. I do not transact business with him.

Garin said audit reports and a check with the recipients and suppliers would disprove the broker's claims. Reports from Cecille E. Fernandez and Nestor P. Burgos Jr., *PDI* Visayas Bureau

Antipregnancy pill . . .

From page A1

(birth license (NSO) IDs) of 2003, prefers pills over other methods of contraception.

It is said to prevent pregnancy by keeping eggs from being released from the ovary while thickening the cervical mucus to keep sperm out of the uterus.

The pill's manufacturer, Organon, has cut its retail price to P75 per strip from the original P102.50. The drastic reduction in price is supposed to benefit the disadvantaged clients.

"By offering the product at a much lower price, Organon will help more women have more access to safe and reliable contraception," Francesca Sullivan, the company's Philippine general manager, said yesterday at a press conference.

Organon has shared head offices in the United States (New Jersey) and the Netherlands (Oss).

The move is supposed to open the local market to companies producing popular contraceptives such as condoms and pills.

But despite the presence of Department of Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, the manufacturers is hearing itself be facing opposition from the Catholic Church, which is firmly against artificial family planning methods.

"We fully respect the stand of the Catholic Church," Sullivan said. "Our opinion is that all Filipinos should have a fully informed choice and make their own decisions."

Promising market

Based on the Filipino pregnancy behaviors indicated in the NSO, there is a promising market for producers of hormone contraceptives.

The survey says women aged between 25 and 44 have their first baby at the median age of 25.2, which is quite near the median age for their first sexual intercourse—21.6 is often seen as and 20.8 among the poor.

In a presentation, Organon medical advisor Dr. Sylvia Santos emphasized the supposed Philippine birth rate of 2.36 percent to four million Filipinos being born every year. Pro-life advocates insist the birth rate is only 1.9 percent.)

Santos said pills were generally efficient in preventing pregnancy, with a failure rate of only 0.1 percent. The failure rate of condoms is 2 percent, and the withdrawal method 4 percent.

Margin of safety

Desogestrel was first introduced in 1981. Currently, it has four million users in more than 100 countries, Organon said.

It is taken on a 28-day regimen and has a margin of safety of 12 hours. That means it is still safe for the user to have sex within that period when she forgets to take the pill, according to Santos.

The pill is also skin-friendly, Santos said, citing a 1998 study claiming that "over 80 percent of pre-existing acne had disappeared after six cycles of treatment."

She noted that the pill rarely showed a low incidence of side effects, such as nausea and headaches, among users.

Another study conducted in 2000 showed that the pill decreases the incidence of menstrual pain or dysmenorrhea, she added.

Santos disputed the allegation that pills were a form of abortifacients, meaning they induced abortion.

Misconception

"It's a misconception and is product of misinformation," she said. The absence or presence of the uterine lining, which is what you can have, most of the pills today prevent ovulation. How can a pill be an abortifacient if there's no pregnancy?"

Santos also claimed that pills could reduce the incidences of ovarian and uterine cancer.

NAIA3 COMPENSATION

Palace: No settlement on Piatco

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG IS NOT INTERested in a settlement with Fraport AG because government lawyers are confident they could win the case filed by the German airport operator for compensation of its investment in Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila, the government's point man for Nait 3, said Fraport had to show proof of its investment in the terminal as the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) in Washington D.C.

"The burden of proof is on them (Fraport). They claim they spent this much for Nait 3 but they should back this up with official records. I believe (CIE) will want proof of their spending before judging on their just compensation," Favila said.

Fraport went to the World Bank to seek administrative relief the government unprocessed the terminal whose contract was deemed to be riddled with

FAVILA

irregularities by the Supreme Court.

Fraport claimed it spent more than $125 million or pay up Nait 3 under a build-operate-and-transfer contract with Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco).

The deal was voided by the Supreme Court in 2003 and it ordered the government to compensate Piatco for its investment.

"We're going to pursue the case. We are confident that we will win. We're not interested in a compromise deal," Favila said yesterday following a briefing in Malacañang.

Last year, Fraport struck a deal with Manila Nairt to sell its stake in Nait 3 for $260 million. The deal collapsed the other day.

"Substantial roadblocks in reaching an agreement could not be removed," Fraport said in a statement on Wednesday.

Fraport said it would continue to pursue compensation for its holding in the terminal through the World Bank after the Philippine government had rejected Fraport's demand for $925 million in compensation.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld its earlier order for the government to pay an initial P6 billion ($117.6 million) to the Fraport-led consortium that built the terminal.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said ICSID should come out with its decision on the case by March or April.

Favila said the government, through the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa), is not to hire an independent assessor to appraise Nait 3.

Fraport said Wednesday it was confident it had a strong case for compensation at the World Bank.

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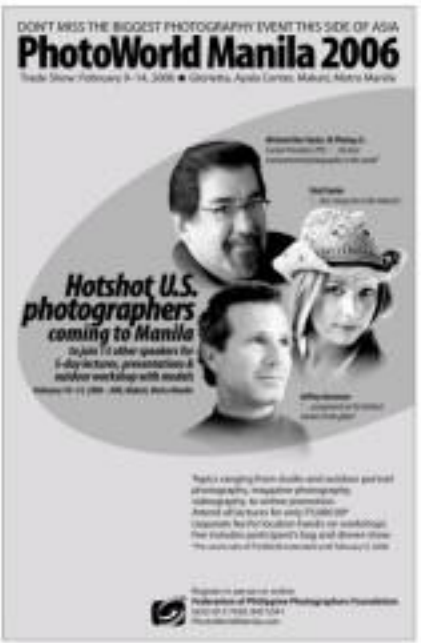
Airport passes to be limited

By Nikko Dizon

AIMING TO FOR the "smaller and passengers, Nino Manila International Airport (Nia) management, the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) has begun limiting the access area allowed for visitors' passes.

Robert Uy, head executive assistant of Miaa general manager Alfonso Cusi, said the airport authority recognizes the Filipino trait of giving a warm welcome or send off but "there are security and operational concerns that have to be taken into consideration."

In a memorandum dated Jan. 31, Cusi cited the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards as a basis for implementing the arrival rules.



The WORLD

Lilac Lorenzo B. Quico

Bush 'State' speech greeted by doubts

Energy plan won't cut need for Mideast oil

By Tom Doggett

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT George W. Bush's new appeal for greater democracy in the Middle East and efforts to make drastic cuts in oil imports from the region was greeted Wednesday with doubts and some opposition.

The president's call for a 75 percent cut in Middle East oil imports in the next 20 years was the centerpiece of his annual State of the Union speech on Tuesday night.

Seeking to regain public support in an election year, he also pursued key allies in the Middle East to promote democracy and made new criticisms of the Iranian regime.

Bush definitely declared that the United States was the indispensable nation in the global stage, asserting that "the only alternative to American leadership is a dramatically more dangerous and uncertain world."

The president said America has "a serious problem" because it is "addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world," like the Middle East.

He called his new research into ethanol, cool-fired plants, solar and wind technologies and nuclear energy as part of a 75 percent of oil imports from the Middle East can be replaced by 2025.

While the administration said plans for increased subsidies would boost research, experts and the media expressed doubts.

"If these technologies have economic merit, we subsidy it necessary. If they don't, then we subsidy will provide it," said Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at the conservative Cato Institute in Washington.

The Washington Post said the goal is spectacular but the "details" is the rub, and it's not clear what he intends in practice."

The US leader also devoted much of his speech to Middle East politics saying the United States cannot hardly withdraw from Iraq, that Egypt and Saudi Arabia must step up democracy efforts and making a direct appeal to the Iranian people. AFP

BUSH a day after delivering his 9th State of the Union address. —AFP

Bush's new energy plan would reduce oil imports from the Middle East by 75 percent by 2025 by building vehicles that run on alternative fuels.

The big three US automakers are each working on a hydrogen fuel cell prototype, but so far prices remain too high for commercial sale.

"But at a price range of $700,000 to $1 million, a lot of work needs to be done to get them to a price point that's feasible," said Dan Shattuck, a spokesperson for the alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

Much work also needs to be done in ensuring the vehicles meet safety and emissions standards, and in developing an infrastructure of hydrogen fueling stations, Shattuck said.

Proponents of ethanol, a fuel that can be made from corn, sugar, or waste products like wood chips and switch grass, are preparing to increase output.

"We are pleased that President Bush recognizes the need to move the country toward an energy future that is less reliant on unreliable and increasingly costly foreign sources of oil," said Bob Dinneen, president of the Renewable Fuels Association trade group.

However, ethanol supplies are not seen reaching the volumes needed to replace crude oil shipments from the Middle East and the hydrogen-powered cars are not supposed to be in showrooms at affordable prices until at least 2020.

Most environmental groups say they like Bush's goal to slash oil imports, but do not think it can be reached unless the government orders a significant boost in fuel efficiency standards for car and trucks.

The federal Energy Information Administration said it in long-term forecast released in December that US crude oil imports will average 12.5 million barrels a day in 2025, with shipments from the Middle East about a quarter of that.

This means to reach in the president's goal, about 2.3 million barrels of daily Mideast imports will have to be replaced through the use of new fuels and new cars.

"It's a significant amount of oil. If he were successful it would be very significant. But I doubt that it will come to pass," said Frank Simmins, director at Energy Security Analysis Inc., in Arizona.

US ethanol supplies will be just 765,000 barrels a day in two decades—a drop in the bucket compared to the more than 20.1 million barrels per day Bush said and president predicts the country will consume, according to the EIA, which is the Energy Department's analytical arm. Reuters

Israel halts tax payments to Palestinians

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL (AP) Wednesday halted tax payments to the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority over Hamas' election victory, prompting the Palestinian premier to turn to Saudi Arabia and Qatar for extra cash to stabilize the economic decline.

Customs revenue collected by Israel on behalf of the authority is the main source of funding for the Palestinian budget. The money, withdrawn on the first of each month, is used to pay an estimated 140,000 Palestinian government workers.

But the United States later on Wednesday pressed Israel to keep up the payments at least until Hamas sets in the government.

"We're talking to them about it. But we have made it very clear ... that individual governments, organizations, look for ways that they could support the interim government," state department spokesperson Sean McCormack told reporters.

Palestinian Economy Minister Mazen Sunnuqrut decided what he called Israel's "illegal decision," saying it amounted to "collective punishment" and estimated that as many as 1 million Palestinians would be affected. "This may cause chaos," he said.

Israel's calls to shun a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority received fresh support from US President George W. Bush, who, along with the European Union, has threatened to cut off funding if the group does not renounce violence and recognize Israel.

"In order for the United States to support a Palestinian government run by Hamas, Hamas must change its party platform and change its way of thinking and get rid of this armed group, as well as change its attitude toward Israel," Bush told Reuters in an interview.

Hamas has urged foreign donors to maintain aid but says it could still find other sources of funding in the Arab world. It sent a delegation of Gaza-based officials and exiled leaders on a tour of Arab countries to urge them to keep the money flowing.

"The tour will aim to clarify Hamas' position based on its election agenda and to press Arab countries to continue with financial aid to the Palestinian people," said Azzat Abu Rahi, a Hamas spokesperson in Gaza City.

A senior Palestinian official said the Palestinian Authority was in negotiations with Saudi Arabia and Qatar for an emergency infusion to aid to the authority can pay its employees. Reuters

ACTRESS Zyi Zhang in a scene from "Memoirs of a Geisha." The film tied with "Crash," and "Good Night, and Good Luck," for six Oscar nominations each. —AP

PLDT ADVISORY

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PLDT

Saddam boycotts trial

BAGHDAD—FORMER Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and other high-profile defendants refused to attend Wednesday's session of their trial, as the ousted leader refused finally completed the first phase of testimony.

Neither Saddam, his former aides, nor any of the three other well-known defendants were at the hearing after they all quit the enemy first session of the trial under a new judge fired Rauhani (Abdel Rahman) counsel on Sunday.

Wednesday's session saw the trial complete the complainants' phase, with testimony directed against the defendants, and never on to the hearing of witnesses.

In the course of the day's testimony two complainants and three witnesses related the drilling terror, under which they had endured or witnessed at the hands of the old regime.

The eight defendants are on trial over the massacre of 148 Shiites from the village of Dujail after an assassination attempt on Saddam in 1982, and have the death penalty if convicted.

One of the most senior defendants, a former Arab Baath party official, also refused to attend, leaving just three of the eight defendants in an accused box marked by the empty black seats. AFP

China won't show 'Geisha'

HONG KONG—THE CHINESE government has extended the release of "Memoirs of a Geisha"—an unexplained decision made amid speculation that officials are worried the sight of Japanese actresses playing Japanese geishas would stir a backlash.

"Memoirs," based on the best-selling novel by Arthur Golden, features "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" star Zhang Ziyi, former local girl Michelle Yeoh and Gong Li from "Raise the Red Lantern" as geishas—entertainers skilled in dance, song and conversation.

The opening shutters may have raised fears in the Chinese government of provoking strong anti-Japanese sentiment. Since, Japanese relations have been strained in recent years over territorial disputes and a lingering worse among many Chinese that Japan hasn't sufficiently apologized for its World War II-era military atrocities.

China once up to 300,000 people were killed in Nanjing during a 1937 rampage of murder, rape and looting by Japanese troops.

Many Chinese scold be offended by the symbolism of ethnic Chinese actresses serving Japanese, albeit in a movie. Adding the already sensitive nature of the film, Zhang's character in the film serves a businessman who was a Japanese soldier in China's then-Japanese-occupied territory of Manchuria.

Among recent anti-Japanese backlash, demonstrators vandalized Japanese-related shops and smashed windows at Japanese diplomatic offices in Shanghai and Beijing in April to protest alleged whitewashing of atrocities by Japanese textbooks. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Bush: No gas price breaks

MOLINE, Tennessee—President George W. Bush says the huge profits of the oil firm Exxon Mobil Corp. are simply the result of free marketplaces and consumers worked with soaring energy costs should not expect price breaks. Early this week, Exxon reported record profits of $9.25 billion for the fourth quarter and $36.13 billion for the year, the largest of any US company. Bush was questioned about his opinion of the profits. Bush said a different situation.

"There is a market place in American society," he said. "There is also a responsibility for energy companies to continue to invest and improve the ways that the American people can get energy," he said. "I would very much hope that Exxon would participate in the development of a pipeline out of Alaska, for example, in order to make sure there's more natural gas available for families and small business owners so the economy will grow." AP

Australia resisted Timor freedom

SYDNEY—A report to the United Nations found that Australia actively lobbied to delay East Timor's independence vote in 1999 and pressed its opposition to pro-Indonesia, the national broadcaster said Thursday. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) said it had obtained a copy of the report by East Timor's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which accused Australia of assisting its duties under international law. The commission produced the 2,400-page report after spending the two years collecting evidence of human rights abuses in the province of East Timor. It said foreign Minister Alexander Downer instructed Canberra preferred for East Timor to remain legally part of Indonesia and actively lobbied the government in Jakarta to delay the independence vote, ABC said. AFP

KHOMEINI ADMIRER...Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad cries during a visit to the tomb of Iran's late founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in Tehran Jan. 31. AFP

Reporting Iran to UN Council a certainty

VIENNA, AUSTRIA—AFTER MONTHS OF fruitless negotiations, European nations have set the stage for reporting Iran to the powerful UN Security Council by the end of the week because of concerns the Islamic country's nuclear program is not "exclusively for peaceful purposes."

Iran remained defiant, warning Wednesday that such action will provoke it into doing exactly what the world wants it to renounce—starting full-scale uranium enrichment, a possible pathway to nuclear weapons.

Positions appeared to be hardening on the eve of an International Atomic Energy Agency meeting after European nations formally submitted a UN-backed motion for the IAEA 35-nation board to refer Iran to the Security Council. The two-day board meeting was to start Thursday.

"Nuclear energy is our right, and we will insist until this right is fully realized," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told a crowd of thousands in the southern Iran city of Bushehr, site of a Russian-built power plant. "Our nation can't give in to the coercion of some bully countries who imagine they are the whole world."

Speaking a day after US President George W. Bush declared in his State of the Union address that "the gravest danger in the world" was posed by Iranian regime to gain nuclear weapons, Ahmadinejad derided the United States as a "hollow superpower" and vowed to pursue the nuclear program.

The IAEA board was expected to approve the motion easily because Russia and China—which hold veto power on the Security Council—were tepper opposing Iran follow-up months of opposition.

"Iran will find itself before the Security Council," state department spokesperson Sean McCormack said in Washington. "Iran is working to develop a nuclear weapon."

The developments were a boost to the United States, the main proponent of referral. Washington has wanted years for international suspicions of Iran's nuclear ambitions to translate into support among board nations.

Iran's decision Jan. 10 to restart small-scale uranium enrichment—and Ahmadinejad's calls for Israel to be wiped off the map—apparently rankled Beijing and Moscow from become more hesitant on its right to pursue a nuclear program and less cooperative in talks with European negotiators after the election of the hard-line Ahmadinejad last June.

The call for referral was contained in a confidential resolution obtained by The Associated Press. It "requests the director general to report to the Security Council" on steps Iran needs to take to dispel international suspicion it could be seeking to make nuclear arms.

If the board approves referral as expected, it will launch a protracted process that could end in Security Council sanctions for Tehran.

Still, any swift moves are weeks or more by away Moscow and Beijing support referral only on condition that the council take no action until at least March, when the board next meets to review the status of an IAEA probe into Iran's nuclear program and recommends further action.

Ali Larijani, Tehran's top nuclear negotiator, warned that Iran would start large-scale uranium enrichment at its Natanz plant and stop intrusive UN inspections of its facilities if referred to the Security Council.

"Natanz is ready for work. We only need to notify the IAEA that we are resuming large-scale enrichment. When we do that is our call. If they [report Iran to the Security Council], we will do it quickly," Larijani said.

Iran insists its nuclear program is civilian only and has no other purpose than to generate power. Enrichment can produce either fuel for a nuclear reactor or the material needed to build a warhead.

Iran's threat to resume large-scale enrichment immediately however, appeared conditional. AP

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OPINION

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Show us the money

WHILE PEOPLE SEEM RESIGNED TO HIGHER prices because of a higher value-added tax, that doesn't mean they like it. Among other things, the first fallout from the consequences of a higher VAT will be felt in people perspire so spend less for Valentine's Day. As the saying already gaining currency goes, "Love is cheap because everything's nuked."

Editorial President Macapagal-Arroyo has unloaded a new round of campaigning, trying to give the skyway billions of reasons to start filing her again: P11.5 billion in January alone for "pump-priming" the economy through spending on what looks like an extremely long pork-rich shopping list: P5 billion for the Philippine Defense Reform, P580 million for farm-to-market roads, P500 million for flood mitigation, P1 billion for the Metrorail-Southrail linkage project, P500 million for the Social Housing Finance Corp., P908 million for the half-priced medicine project, P500 million for the Philhealth insurance program, P500 million for the National Food Authority food program, P500 million for airport development, P500 million for the construction of school buildings, P580 million for high school vouchers, P500 million for the Food-for-School projects, and P680 million for the Barangay and Street Beautification program. She has announced that she would release P1 billion for hiring new cops and the purchase of new riot and patrol gear, not to mention school savings and higher salaries-as well as a P1,000 across-the-board increase in the compensation of government workers.

But given all these generous giveaways and projects being distributed by the President, we wonder how Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye could say with a straight face: "We have already proven that we can bite the bullet for the sake of the economy and the whole world is looking again us to fully implement our fiscal and economic reforms." The President's P35-billion pump-priming fund for the economy (already in the process of being spent as noted above) will come from "savings" which, she says, was made possible because the government's fiscal team had "overachieved." Since presumably these pump-priming activities signal the end of forced savings, that can't bode well for the deficit-reduction aspect of her fiscal reform program. But the more important question is: is there rhyme or reason behind the spending this quest beyond birding the military, the bureaucracy and the provinces with patronage?

With the raising of the VAT rate, the government expects to rake in an additional P66 billion in income yearly. Either this income is meant to bring the deficit closer to being eliminated or it is meant to provide a hoosier injection of funds to pay for vital investments in necessary infrastructure, social services and other development spending required for growth. Either way, however, with the administration so obviously eager to spend, spend, spend, the public deserves to know where the money's really going. As Sen. Manuel Roxas II has pointed out, "The people are entitled to tangible benefits from the additional taxes that they pay in the government." He asked if the administration does, indeed, have a plan for spending its new tax income. He said the best way to do this is through a proper discussion of the national budget.

Under normal circumstances, the government would have had a new General Appropriations Act signed around this time of the year. It does not have a budget yet. Considering how thoroughly the President's coalition controls the House of Representatives, and still maintains a sizable number of allies in the Senate, the absence of a budget should be a cause for concern.

The failure to enact a budget means the old budget will be rolled over, so to speak. Which means billions of appropriations for the President and her allies to move around and disburse funds for items the prying eyes of the public or even foreign institutions that are interested in seeing the government put its fiscal house in order, at the very least, in the hands of unscrupulous officials, it affords endless temptations to dip into public funds meant for already-finished projects, to fund an anti-impeachment or pro-Charter change campaign. Politically beneficial as that might be, it doesn't speak well of government's seriousness in spending the public's money either wisely or well.

Love songs at Front Page on Valentine's Day

(Continued from last Wednesday)

IN MY FEB. 1 COLUMN, I CRITICIZED THE government policy on squatting. This policy only encourages more squatting and will not solve the problem, I said. It not only treats squatters with bit gloves, it coddles them. Because of it, the government can spend gazillions of pesos for relocation but in the end there would be more squatters because it gives incentives to squatting.

The Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA), better known as the Lina Law, and the law that decriminalized squatting (both passed because legislators were courting the votes of squatters) are only partly to blame. The Lina Law has rather strong provisions against opportunistic and professional squatters, but local government units, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other government agencies do not enforce the law completely. Only the government favoring the squatters are enforced.

The law punishes professional squatters (almost half of all squatters are professional) and squatting syndicates (behind every squatter colony is a syndicate with its officials, lawyers, enforcers and collectors) but no professional squatter or squatting syndicate has ever been prosecuted.

Local government units, from the barangays to the municipal and city levels, are supposed to be the first line of defense against the influx of new squatters. But barangay officials, councilors, mayors and even congressmen coddle the squatters because they are voters. Under the Lina Law, officials who coddle squatters are liable for prosecution, but have you heard of any local government official prosecuted for doing so?

A presidential decree provides that squatters living within the sites of government infrastructure projects such as streets, buildings, rail lines and esteros can be ejected summarily and are not entitled to government relocation programs. The Lina Law also called

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

for a census of squatters—the deadline for which passed several years ago—after which those who are not listed can also be ejected summarily and without government help. Yet the DPWH and other government agencies have spent and are still spending billions of pesos to relocate and pay off squatters who are not entitled to them. That is because the DPWH and other government agencies are afraid of squatters.

For the 2006 fiscal project, the government is spending several billions, about half of the cost of the railroad itself, to relocate the squatters on the rail line, although the laws do not provide for that. For the squatters still complain.

Although the government spends a lot of money to acquire and develop the relocation sites and physically transfer squatters, they still get the rights to the lots and houses assigned to them and then go back to squatting, expecting to be relocated again and earn some more. That is why when a street is about to be constructed, squatters flock to the site, expecting to be relocated and paid off by the government. The government seems to be paying taxpayers' money into a bottomless pit without making a dent on the squatting problem. It seems incorrigible barbarians, the squatters, at the expense of law-abiding taxpayers.

When will the government wake up?

* * *

After the Grammys, the Heat Bars and Andy Williams, you the Tongpos Brothers be behind? There is a revival of pastoral singers everywhere. This is probably a backlash to the commercialized pop music which is more being passed off as music and is

rife with double entendres and outright vulgarities.

Among the pastoral singers are Freddie Aguilar, Ryan Cayabyab, Noel Cabangon, Gary Granada, Jose Mari Chan, Rico Puno, Rey Valera, Ogie Alcasid, Gary Valenciano, Martin Nievera, Jaya, Sharon Cuneta, Regine Velasquez, Lea Salonga, Pilita Corrales, Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, Ms. Pilita's daughter Kristina, Ms. Nora's daughter Lotlot, Ms. Vilma's daughter Ryan Yllana, Ms. Lea's husband Robert Seña, Ms. Regine's husband Ariel Henares, Ms. Sharon's husband Pia Cayetano, Ms. Jaya's husband Ronnie Henares

Bishops as politicians

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ISMAEL Mamadou once said, "If people want control of power, they should get it from their archbishop. They should consult him to find out if they have the right moral credentials to run for a term of office."

But the question is: What if bishops use politics?

The issue is compounded by the element that when bishops predispose pronouncements on political affairs, there is a tendency to read into such pronouncements the hidden agenda that their pastoral statements transcend set the tone of final, ejaculating the cloth-the bishops.

This intrigue over a related issue raised by another politician. It is said that during the late-term Carl Pilar, a visitor to the offices (those days) of President Ferdinand Marcos. "Said to me on one side." To which, without batting an eyelash, Lisondo replied: "We trust, sir, that God is on our side. It is more important to know that we are on God's side."

On Jan. 28, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral statement on governance. The first, titled "Renewing Our Public Life Through Moral Values," covered political concerns that have to do with the political crisis of the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo. The other concerned an economic issue and called for the repeal of the value-added tax (VAT) law and the adoption of a comprehensive agenda which raised the question whether the bishops have expanded their intervention in state affairs beyond the safe limits of separation between Church and State. Another question is how much of the bishops' concerns over the secular stuff than they can swallow. Some would ask: Why don't the bishops get elected and run the country, instead of politicians, so they can be canonized by the cult of public accountability?

The CBCP's pastoral statements may seem sanctimonious, since there has been mounting public pressure on the bishops to clarify their pastoral letter of July 13, 2005, in which they did not join the chorus for the resignation of President Arroyo, but which left open their options for the termination of the crisis. Subsequently suspicions, reproachment, and tensions in a rash administration inquire into allegations that the President had manipulated the 2004 elections.

The second and third modes did not materialize, having survived the crisis of July 8 and the impeachment complaint has floundered. The first option is unlikely to step down voluntarily (MO) she changed condition, the pastoral statement of July 13 was overtaken by events and the Church is no longer in a pivotal position, like it was on July 13, to determine the fate of the Arroyo administration.

The Jan. 28 statement took the bishops out of the ambiguity of their July 13 statement and months on by no dainty in examining the causes of the crisis, now in a state of impasse. With their recent statement, the bishops have placed a higher respect for empirical evidence on the political crisis by than they had last July. Their latest statement did not mince words, while the previous one left room to doubt as to whether the harsh words being used by the President, although indirect, did not include what appeared to be some broadening agenda.

Nothing can be more emphatic and specific about the bishops' position than this opening statement: "We have all observed the failure of political processes to make public servants accountable for wrongdoing.

"What we have witnessed are acts of evasion and obscuration of the truth, as in the case of the wiretapping and the Garci/Lim controversy.

"While we acknowledge that partisan and sincere Filipinos have heeded our call to July 2005 for accountability in public office and made means for the truth to emerge, we also witness those who seem to use the search for truth as a means of furthering their political ambitions.

In a month of all this, there seems to be a painstaking effort in their political speech.

These statements are emphatically verifiable. They therefore carry more weight than the gross insinuations of bishops whose factuals has been lying on such judgments and about on evidence. Recently, about the events of the Jan. 16 statement. This time, the bishops have chosen to raise the temperature to play political cribble-rousers and parallel to the gallery of a hostile public calling for blood.

The pastoral statement is clear about what to do next.

First, the search for truth must be "extraordinarily pursued through unanimous and processes mandated by law and our Constitution."

"They did not really pursue the attack," said the CBCP president, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, referring to the bishops' July statement. Lagdameo explains against my Arroyo last September. "They accepted as exclusionaries."

Second, electoral reforms should be urgently taken, beginning with the suggestions or even presentation of members of Commission on Elections officials and the modernization of the electronic-voting apparatus.

Third, the 2007 elections "should not be cancelled."

Fourth, the bishops do not support "many efforts" to change the Constitution and said revision "when done through a constituent convention."

These proposals constitute a manageable framework of political action that is not driven by any illusion that what bishops open, their acts do not think of God and God is an indivisible. The bishops' return to reality does not, however, close the issue of whether their political activism has crossed the boundaries separating Church and State. Thus is a more disturbing issue than the occasional outbursts of the former regime, although it is not the public interest that the latter is one to modernity 2007.

A 'medical oasis'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A POLITICIAN who recently passed away (he had gone to Texas to seek treatment for his ailment, but spent two weeks waiting in vain for an appointment with the world-renowned specialist recommended to him). When his family decided to seek treatment elsewhere, the politician was confined to a hospital in another state and that was where he died.

Of course, there are no guarantees in life—or in death. But one cannot help thinking that had the prominent public official, as well as having the capacity to pay, would have assured the state the best medical treatment in the world. Then again, neither could his family and friends be assured that he would get the best treatment he sought, he would still be alive today.

But one could still improve the odds. Not many wealthy Filipinos—and even are we wealthy compared to the rest of the Asian region—will be able to travel to the United States for medical treatment, as witness, especially for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

In come, however, is a group composed of prominent cancer specialists and representatives of St. Luke's Episcopal Health System (SLEH), the "principal health care institution" within the Texas Medical Center. The group is here primarily to promote the "medical oasis" that the Texas Medical Center has gained reputation as to seekers, especially for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

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SCHEDULE SHIFT due to offshore winds in the Texas Medical Center already have a foot in the local market by way of the Houston Medical Group (HMG), which represents the institution in the country headed by "president emeritus" Leo de Leon, a Filipino businessman who

same lease in 1997 after 20 years living in Houston. HMG has developed a program together with leading US-trained Filipino physicians to provide painless and data family "access to world-class medical services, ensuring cardiophysiology, cancer care, and cultural sensitivity."

HMG president Filipino citizen with two types of services. One is the "virtual second opinion," where a patient's medical records are sent to the Texas to be reviewed by specialists who will render a second opinion that includes treatment options. If needed, HMG could also arrange for a consultation call with SLEH's international patient coordinator.

Should the client decide to go for treatment in Houston, HMG could "manage the entire process before, during and after" one's stay, including serving as the agency's liaison in coordination with the specialists of one's choice, pre-registration for admission to SLEH, a pre-departure briefing, and even airport assistance, translation assistance, and a tour to historic shopping areas in the Texas.

It's the "depth of care" that is available at TMC that puts it way above other local treatment centers, Dr. Leon believes. "We have a unique environment in which we have a university, a teaching hospital, or our research institution, but we have also all institutions and all the expertise, technology and research work in cancer."

TMC is a real "medical city," with over 41 institutions, including 13 hospitals and 11 schools, all clustered together in an area roughly the size of Makati. In 2006, it registered 5.2 million patients, about 10,000 of them from over 80 countries outside the United States. SLEH alone has five "centers of excellence": the Texas Heart Institute founded by world-renowned cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Denton Cooley; the Texas Cancer Institute; the Texas Lung Institute; and the Texas Urology Institute, and the Texas Lung Institute.

• • •

FOR this visit, Dr. Leon brought over two top surgeons from SLEH: Dr. Brian Allen, medical director of the Texas Cancer Institute and a leading authority on urology; and Dr. Steve Lapin, director of SLEH's Mesothelioma Center.

"I am very impressed with the physicians we've talked to and the institutions we've visited," says Dr. Allen, adding that he would be willing to "go back here more" among the Filipinos. In Houston, he said, they have not just a truly international patient base, but equally important, a multicultural staff. "We have people who speak Tagalog, Spanish" who ensure that patients have different psychologies and having a rich resource of doctors from around the world helps in understanding and treating them."

At present, aside from Manila, SLEH has sent its officers to Cebu, Davao and Makati, Inc.

"The vision of Texas Medical Center as a united front," says Whitehead, was the salvation. Fifteen to 20 years ago, the Texas Medical Center was a network of medical talents, running edge technology and the latest advances in research, from all around the world, in one place. For desperate patients, the Texas might seem like a last resort, but when they're running out of hope and time, just what they're running out of here.

• • •

OOPS! I have no excuses, but I made an error in Wednesday's column on the Comelec and the contracts awarded to Mega Pacific. Mega Pacific contracts had wanted $5 billion of the people's money in the botched "modernization" program. The real figure is "only" P2.3 billion—still a sizable figure, and still money paid for by taxpayers. And yes, the election commissioners, starting with Chair Benjamin Abalos, should still resign and not resist that impeachment is the only way they can be forced out of office.

The first shot

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

October 1896: "He walked in a brown pattern of an undertaker, and upon many years mentioning those dancers that his sisters and makers were service as maid." In Simon's books are 5 cuts two pairs of hats, one mending and being the camera, the other watching, and the last is a bird.

His own account of the event goes:

"That night, about 8 o'clock, Donalfol Miller and I—there were two of us—were cautiously passing on duty. We came to a house and made my report to the officer in charge. Suddenly, we heard, quite near to hand, on our left, there was a low similar volatile Filipino compose signal attends. [This] was immediately answered by a similar volatile, about 25 yards to the right. There is not known finished to signal from Balintawak No. 7. We had never come such a sign before, so I quickly ordered them to move slowly up out. 25 feet in front of us, it was a Filipino. I yelled, 'Halt!' and made a pretty loud, but I was unconcerned to challenging the officer of the guard in approved military style. The man turned. I challenged him again, yelling, 'Halt!' This time he evidently showed, 'Halt!' as me. 'Halt,' I thought the best thing to do was to shoot him. He dropped. If I didn't kill him, I got him in the end of flight.

"There was Filipino sprang out of the question at once. He then ran in a zigzag course and while first and dropped me. [one another was left. Well, I think I got my second Filipino that time. We returned to where we on other Filipino were and said: 'Line up, fellows, the niggers are in here all through these yards.' We then returned to the first line and got behind the water main and stayed there all night. It was some minutes after on record about before the Filipinos began firing."

There is no mention of the last Spain Bridge in Simon's narrative. We are described as "ragged" and the account does not name that a few days before the shooting there was Simon in-towers the insurrectos and Filipino troops because he would count a road to from Bocaue to Simon to Blackhouse [illegible] with a bird.

This case also wonders whether the Filipinos ever knew what "Halt!" means. In the darkness, I imagine that when the Filipino answered back "Halt!" he was probably smiling and waving his hand in a welcoming gesture, not with a bird but. This is a part of our history we know so well, but when studied in school we are not made to imagine or reconstruct what actually happened and why it led to the Filipino-American War.

Today historians of the Philippine Centennial Commission are working on projects for U.S. Studies, and the "The First Shot of the Philippine-American War," that long ago already stated that the events did not happen on the Juan Bridge.

• • •

Is there any monument or historical marker that does find on that memorable night that lived on San Juan Bridge—or is a monument impossible to find, it has been considered important that both the American and Filipino forces associated on either end of the San Juan Bridge remained as there were during the earlier night, and that neither fired at the other?

Where did the story of San Juan Bridge come from? Why do some people persist in propagating the story of the bridge in the light of current research—but says the shot was fired on Santiago Street?

• • •

Comments are welcome at ocampoambeth@yahoo.com.

Sayonara

SHE WAS SILLEN AND SILENT THE DAY SHE HAD TO leave, back in time, crying in handkerchief tissues. At 22, she had never been outside of Luzon, never flown on a plane. Now she was going off on Japan, and like six months ahead, seem seemed like eternity.

She'd call occasionally from Japan, going through the usual business and assurances she was fine. Always she'd ask about the weather—invariably the summers hear, since the rains, since the leaves changing colors in the fall, and then she called starting to [illegible] ... she'd be home soon in an airport or preschool.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Then she was home, in time for Christmas.

She was delighted to be home, as he is to unwind with the band.

In, for one year after winning her friends back in Japan. She had pictures of all her friends and her Filipino relatives. She acted showing the digital pictures taken during their departure as she did, with a large banner that read "Sayonara!"

Her cell phone rang incessantly, with calls from other Filipinas she had befriended, some back here in the Philippines, others still in Japan. There were also calls from her Japanese guests, both those who'd come to the airport to see her off and those who could not. Both the Japanese and Philippine guests had treated friends like "ndings," "ates," "bida," "sisters for me" and "long sis." So, she said, most of them had never been to the Philippines, but promised they'd come over to visit.

Japan

Was there someone special? Yes, she smiled, this a young schoolgirl with a crush. And he too had promised to visit some time, and help out.

Help was a word she was hearing now all too frequently from relatives calling in from their locked, please help. Mercedes's monthly remittance next week, please help.

Her contract stated she'd get ¥200,000 a month. That would have been ¥1,000 for six months—P60,000 or P10 to a dollar, which was the rate when she left. While in Japan, she received a living allowance of 1,500 yen a week (about P7000). That way, they said here, she would get some she returned from Japan.

She went straight from the airport to the agency to collect. She knew there would be all kinds of deductions for her passport, visa, ticket, dancing lessons, board and lodging, even cosmetics. The agency had it all computed, and after deducted for the dollar and the yen dropping. They gave her P35,000.

But she had expected that, today that she was still getting some money. She had worked hard for the trip, and had done well, her upcoming at about 60 "kapal," each being 10,000 yen. Those were the bonuses given to customers who flatter male past-a-thaler and they would tell the host her, adding one "kapal" or P6,000 for every kapal. Well, some hard bargaining she would get P4,000, but by August's, she changed to never entertain about P1,500. Exchange rates were bad, they said.

Her kapalan P4,000 was a come to P270,000 — not bad at all for six months of work. But if money came in fairly easily, it's been spent quite quickly, thanks to all the requests for help. Two months after returning home, she's exchanged almost 20 kapal.

Disneyland

She had her passbook prepared, now in advance to two half-Filipino bosses, dispatched through one of the many door-to-door delivery services.

There was underpants in the boxes and suitcases were opened, the gifts listening eyes. They were all from her former bosses, and included Japanese sweets, sweets, several types of black mushrooms, seaweed, crackers and cookies (without seaweed). But those only counted as pasalubong. She still had to buy Christmas gifts, and that she had to shop.

There were only and saba around the months as most days regardless. Look, wash dry iron.

Days later, she said she'd finished the book Japanese practice. The Japanese tourists were calling for P5K each. It was a bit like the days of Clark and PX, "exclusive" goods being sold on special if they came out. Since their boxes that clothes the interiors.

But the boxes from Japan were spacious, the subscribers were obtained the Japanese were with dreadlocks. She'd brought back a lot of that obsession, in the form of Japanese laundry powder.

She'd been spending a city days at least and a half away from Tokyo. One of her guests had picked her up early one morning for an outing. They drove through Tokyo but didn't go off. Their destination was Tokyo Disneyland, where they spent the day and where she got nearly carried outside. There were lines to wait, so she could get to work. They were the only ones she left the city where she was working.

Her half-Filipino boss printed a menagerie of stuffed animals and Disney characters. Besides the food and dress guys and stuffed toys, there were the stickers of friends. While in Japan, she had a book of stickers and used to add these stickers, about everything one USD you each (about P45).

Maybe, she thought, she could open a store and sell the stickers. But her father succeeds a bicycle for mother's house and his. Her brother's diamond-cut high school in June.

Tomorrow

She worries about her diminishing kapal, especially only 6 friends morning but the exchange rate was dropping. What she left back in June, you could get P5,000 for each kapal.

She denies if she can go back. The Japanese government matches dollars $5,000 Filipino entertainers each year, down to a dozen to 6,000. The screening agencies promised, open one which full page ads appearing to the government in here now. Both the Japanese and Philippine governments would their genuine "artists" and "entertainers" from the many "fakers"—those who go back, a second, a third, a fourth time. Talents are a different lot, smarter, "one step ex", and true wasn't supposed to mean wiser; it's just that they don't cry as much when they were away.

Japan's beautiful, she keeps repeating, and the Japanese are very nice people, at least in the center cities. Japan and the Japanese remain mysterious. She never married a Japanese hubby. She saw Japanese mobsters with their bodies, all her friends had been always as in, and she'd think of the baby she'd left back home.

She'd never had to call on extensions, or technicalities or anything. She did have to use chopsticks, and to an audition. And the day after she came home, the lengths Japanese law at P70 a kilo for meats she missed it.

She saw Japan's changing seasons from her apartment windows and on her walk to the club, every day as assumed it in the evening, but that was the joy of Japan, she enjoyed always through the long sets of hours. The rains made her sad, but longing for home running for the warm sunlight shone on, and smiles.

It was good to be home. But if the chance go again.

The agency says maybe they can find a placement for her in Korea. That's where everyone goes now, she says.

Council of State forgot off-and-on Mindanao war

IT IS SAD TO NOTE THAT THE COUNCIL OF State meeting, held last Jan. 24 and attended only by allies of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, did not discuss matters of greater consequence for the Filipino people—like the off-and-on war in Mindanao. People are tired of watching the daily political charades. No matter how loud our politicians proclaim their nationalism in the high heavens, at the end of each day, we still find our wages unable to buy enough food to put on our family tables; our water and electricity bills soaring out of our reach; our children's well-being—body and mind—threatened because the quality of health and education services has so deteriorated.

The way in Mindanao is by fear over notwithstanding Mr Arroyo's highfalutin' pedestrian and servitorian, which she uses to justify **El military presence in Mindanao** and as big for more military aid, in the end of every issues war in Mindanao, our people either end up with a cramped and poorly furnished temporary areas or dead to their farms or homes.

From the very beginning, it was clear that Mr Arroyo convened the Council of State to push for Charter change. When it ended, the so-called "historic" meeting had addressed none of the country's real problems. All it came up with was the decision to allocate P5 million of the people's money for a public information committee to advertise and sell Cha-cha. Instead of coming up with policies and programs that would significantly improve the lives of millions of Filipinos...Christians and Muslims alike—who are earning $2 a day, all it offered was a committee tasked with feeding the ill-informed nation with homey-coated lies about the merits of Cha-cha.

The majority of the people in Mindanao are not—and were never—in favor of Cha-cha because we know that it would not necessarily liberate us and our children from the scourge of war or poverty. The Constitution meeting and the earlier Lahar caucus, as well as the Davao de Razon-GMA, premiers, only reinforced our conviction that Cha-cha would not be good for our people and that it would benefit only our greedy and opportunistic politicians and their cronies.

The people in Mindanao oppose in the strongest terms possible GMA-PGA-JDV's Cha-cha initiative, **as much as any constitutional** amendment that will surrender our country, resources and people to foreign economic exploitation and political domination, whether done by foreign neo-colonizers or by their local satraps.

We need changes, but they should be genuine and lasting changes, and they should be for our people and by our people.

—ABHAR ALI LIDASAN
secretary general,
Moro-Christian People's Alliance (MCPA)
68 Bagugiliga St., Barangay Proyektos,
Diliman, Quezon City

Chile's Bachelet and Macapagal-Arroyo

MICHAEL TAN'S COLUMN ON CHILE'S NEWly elected President Michelle Bachelet (PDI, 1/28/06) reveals a sensitive chord, even for us, Filipino migrants in Greece who left a thousands of miles away from the Philippines. Certainly, we wish and believe that our country could be great, could still develop, as that Filipinos do not need to go out there homes to serve other countries. Then, the Philippines could not have to suffer a brain drain and the social roots of migration.

But all this phenomenon of brain drain is due where the failure of our leaders to truly serve their country. And we see in the women leader of Chile a person totally different from Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Unlike her, Bachelet genuinely feels for the people of Chile, for their suffering and for their dreams.

The present occupant of Malacañang was born with endless spoon in her mouth. She never knew hunger. I need not say more. Tan's column said it all.

—JOEY VARELLA
Kallisti 6 limni, gr

How do we rate Filipino teachers?

HOW DO WE RATE OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM? Is it accurate to say the proficiency and competence of our teachers in all subjects, including those that they have not studied for years?

My mother has been an elementary school teacher for years. She is actually retiring next year because of math exams. I just found out that they had to take exams in Math and other subjects. This is reportedly being done by our **government because of the alarming decline in** the quality of our educational system.

But what **happened?**

Are the teachers the main reason why the quality of our educational system is poor? My **mother handles more than 50 students** in Grade 5 in a very crowded room. I'm just worried that the results of the examinations would be used as basis for blaming our teachers as the culprit behind the deterioration of our educational system.

I am not opposed to these examinations, as long as they are done regularly and with corresponding seminars and workshops.

My mother has her share of greatness when she coached students, including me and my sister, for regional Quiz Bees. Even now graduates review for **us exams.** Do we expect students who have been teaching Culture or Arts for 15-20 years to master mathematics? Perhaps, officials of the Department of Education should ask themselves: Do we offer refresher courses, seminars and workshops to enhance our teachers' competencies? I am proud to be a product of our public school system in the 1980s. But right now, I doubt if the problems in our schools—no matter if you put a whitewash around it—**could be solved overnight.**

Our classrooms are jam-packed, and the teachers are no longer given the chance to specialize in subjects which they are most suited to.

—ANTHONY JOSH E. VILLARBE,
Batchel, Mandaue City

LETTERS

The future that mining holds for our country

EITHER OF TWO POSSIBLE SCENARIOS IS certain to come about if the government succeeds in attracting global mining corporations to hand on the country's mineral wealth: one, Philippine mineral resources will be depleted in 20-years; two, irreparable harm to the environment will render the country's mineral deposits non-"environmentally-really" to mine.

Either way, we lose.

According to Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) records, between 1996 and 2000, the country lost 32 percent of its copper, nickel and gold reserves. That this happened during a slump in mining operations only adds to speculations that as much more of these precious **minerals will be lost amid unbridled mining** activities directed by foreign interests. That's just as much hospitality for a country that needs all its resources for its own development.

Before our leaders think of auctioning off this wealth, they should pause to consider what disasters they are doing to the national sovereignty and the people's search for genuine development—a limit that taps our vast mineral deposits to create and advance domestic **metal-based industries.**

On the other hand, stirring by for a quiet will put our environment in an overwhelmingly more precarious state. From 1990 to 2000, 10 major incidents of mine spills were recorded **by the MGB. There's a clear and present danger** that more mines will collapse soon due to illegal small scale. These spills caused tremendous harm to the environment, property and means of livelihood of farmers, fisherfolks and indigenous peoples. Most celebrated of such incidents were the coast that buried Marinduque province in now a wasteland and will continue to be so for a hundred years, **notwithstanding lackluster efforts at rehabili**tation. Still, the government is even now again preparing the island for mining's return despite widespread local opposition.

Conventional and scientific wisdom prods everyone to take a precautionary view on mining's effects on the environment, more so, in the case of archipelagic Philippines with its rich terrestrial, aerial and marine biodiversity.

There is, however, another scenario that developing Nations—like Philippines are coming out in opposition to the government's anti-FTAA/pro-mining program. It is only a matter of time when—like what happened in the gas **ventures in Bolivia...Filipinos will host** on a regime that does not mind selling the nation's patrimony and imperilling its environment and the people's long-term social and economic sustainability.

—ED MEDALADA,
information officer,
Center for Environmental
Concerns-Philippines,
25-B Maria Knight St.,
Barangay Central, Quezon City

Colored with politics

OK, fair is fair! Readers were concerned, the last fortnight belonged to the feathers/weight having champion Manny Pacquiao. But something dampened the resurgent national pride: politicians rushing to bask in a muscled brown athlete's moments of glory as though it were their own, only to go back to many business as usual.

The color of Manny is known—a little known hamlet of the great brown race that became famous in the boxing world. Interned into a celebrity fathomed name made fully word state to the walls of fame.

As his mask and stint don, people from all walks of life many copies of him—autographs, a foolish memorial, like I that I shooting solution handing of owning an idol in the flesh. This includes politicians and a President who became fans wanting to see Pacquiao in the flesh. Forgetting that they are republic figures without solution and worldwide acclaimed by paying media eyes. (To) the emphasis of victory felt by every Filipino, they add another color to Manny's victory: political color.

Real doesn't another color green. With $2 million in prize money and more coming from any-per-view TV, Pacquiao is laughing all the ways to the bank, unbothered by political economics.—Cindo Araga, California 90018

• • •

Politicians weren't there but you were: Manny Pacquiao fought the good fight and still lost. He dealt with his defeat alone and won alone it with innate discipline and signature training. Now, he's a big winner, and everyone who needs votes in the next national elections is a special friend.

But beyond national pride, everyone should just get over it soon and get back to work. It's an unprecedented boom he overtyans, not just Filipinos.

Yes, it makes a great metaphor for the country's ailing economy, but metaphors won't cure the national economy or keep local politicians from stealing people's votes.—Marvin Carlos, Wandside, Silver Creek

• • •

The newest victory of our champion Manny Pacquiao proved to be a great uniter in those times of instability and a great source of pride to the Philippines. I am 21 and an immigrant to the United States. As a Filipino, I had never felt any great pride in my roots.

I had not felt this pride since that afternoon of June 12, 1998, when President Fidel Ramos led the nation in singing our national anthem in Rizal Park live on national television, and when my parents participated in the centre of Pinilisan! Mayon, with the millions that flocked to Edsa in February 1986.

Manny Pacquiao has proven that we can still be united—Filipinos from all walks of life, administration or opposition, rich or poor. On that fateful day last week, Manny proved to be the "Great Unifier" for his country. Through punches, jabs and **hooks, he put the Philippines back on the map. The nation was** filled with euphoria. The crime rate was rare during the fight. (And) politicians shook hands, people celebrated all over the country.

I hung a Philippine flag outside our home for the second time. **The first time I did it was in our home in Bulacan during the Indo**pendence centennial celebration in 1998.

Let us not forget that we do not need a match or victory of Manny Pacquiao every day to be united. We just need inspiration, and Manny is only one of the millions of Filipinos that can be the source of pride. Every day let us be inspired to unite to move our motherland forward. Can't you think it's time to start the reforms we have been looking for?—Jaby Glenn Canales, 41, 3611 Bonnie Ski Place, Watsonville, Hawaii, USA

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

Philippine Daily Inquirer

Watch Pinoy Power in America's Hottest Dance Challenge!

DANCE

ABC

TV GUIDE

Friday, February 3, 2006

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[author block]

Across the NATION

[author block]

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GMA forms body to probe mine spill

DENR clears Lafayette of mercury use

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources yesterday rushed to the defense of Lafayette Mining Inc., backing the company's claim that it was not using mercury in its gold mining project in Rapu-Rapu, Albay.

The mercury found by environmentalists in areas surrounding the Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic Project site in Albay could have come from nearby active volcanoes, like the Mayon Volcano, and natural evaporation of bodies of water.

Previous geological studies have also revealed that there is a mercury deposit in Albay.

"The DENR is cautious only not having results samples from the project area and that affected water bodies but there is no sufficient evidence to attribute mercury contamination to the operations of the Rapu-Rapu mine," the DENR said in a statement yesterday.

The DENR released the findings late yesterday after an environmentalist group announced that rock heavy metals were found in sedimentary samples from the area surrounding the Lafayette mine.

"The presence of heavy metals such as cadmium, chromium, lead, arsenic and mercury from the sediment samples analyzed ... is to be expected because the project area inherently contains these minerals," the DENR said.

The unusually high levels of metals indicate the economic viability of mining in the area as gold and copper deposits are associated with such metals.

With David Hagos

PULANGUI, ALBAY—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo ordered a thorough investigation of the mine spill in Rapu-Rapu, Albay following a statement made by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines opposing continued mining in the country.

The President, who was born in mainland Albay, also announced the release of P10 million to fishermen who suffered losses in income after a fish scare gripped several fishing villages in Batangas and Albay.

During her visit, Ms Arroyo announced the forming of an independent commission to look into the operations of Lafayette Mining Inc.

The President made the move following a meeting with members of the CBCP in Malacañang Monday. Part of the meeting's agenda was mining.

Commission members will be selected by bishops in the Bicol region, who initiated the dialogue on the Lafayette issue with the President.

The bishops had designated Lucenzo Bishop Arturo Bastes as spokesperson and authorized him to choose the commission's members.

Michael Defensor, Ms Arroyo's chief of staff and former environment secretary, said the government could not unilaterally cancel the mining permits that the government already granted.

"The government has contractual obligations that were with the permit, especially since the investors have already infused some $300 to $400 million into their operations," Defensor said.

He, however, said the mining firm must continue to prove the technical soundness of their operations, from their standard operating procedures to engineering works.

The government, he added, would not hesitate to shut down any mining operation that violates the conditions in their permits and environmental laws.

Ms Arroyo said the P10 million financial help for fishermen will be routed through the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC) who will closely coordinate with a committee to be headed by Msgr. Francisco Monje of the Synogan diocese.

The commission was approved with the intervention of business tycoon Lucio Tan's son Lucio Tan.

John Sarmiento, Lafayette corporate secretary and director, said Lafayette was willing to help the commission in its investigation.

Ms Arroyo said funds for the commission's operations will come from Lafayette. Bobby Lindan, Lee Antonio and Michael Amoten, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SOLDIERS patrol a village in Tarlac following clashes with communist guerrillas that sent residents fleeing. AP PHOTO

Troops keep villagers out of Tarlac homes

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAMP OLIVA, PARMANGA—At least 3,000 residents who fled Tuesday's clashes between government troops and communist rebels in Sta. Ignacia, Tarlac, have yet to return home.

Sta. Ignacia Mayor Reynaldo Medrano said the plan of the residents of Barangay Sta. Ines West was to return home yesterday, but fighting still not possible on Thursday as military officers ordered them to wait until soldiers conduct clearing operations in the area.

"We've told them we promise their return home as soon as our people re-entry," he said.

He said rebel warlikes leaders were monitoring if civilians were killed or hurt in the clashes and in the air raids done by the military in villages where the fighting broke out.

The military recovered at least 10 bodies of slain New People's Army rebels. A soldier was killed while four others were wounded in the series of encounters.

As the gunfights raged, 90-degree cold Sta. Ignacia residents, many of them farmers farmers, left the villages and went to the houses of their relatives. Some have cited sneaking back into the hilly villages during the days to check on their crops and fed to animals.

Students, however, said his people were not complaining of food shortage.

"The situation is under control, that they really wanted to go home anyway," he said.

Col. Rolando Cuenca, chief of the Army's 702nd Infantry Brigade, denied ordering an evacuation in the three villages.

In a separate interview, Lt. Col. Gregory Cayetano, commander of the 71st Infantry Battalion that engaged some 40 rebels on Tuesday, said the residents left voluntarily after they were advised to stay out of harm's way.

"We don't want to see them to be used by the rebels as shields," Cayetano said.

Garcia said a few soldiers had tried to return on Wednesday but left in haste after they received reports that 150 rebels planned to attack the village. He said he pulled out some soldiers to reduce casualties.

ROUNDUP

2 killed in Bulacan attack

SAN ILDEFONSO, Bulacan—Two people were shot and killed by unidentified men in a farm in Barangay Pitpitan here on Wednesday night. Chief Insp. Ernesto Lihaman, town police chief, said at least 15 men barged into the house of Ricardo Salenzuela, 63, at 8 p.m., looking for guns supposedly kept by the family. When the suspects failed to find any firearm, they searched the family's belongings. Salenzuela and his son, Noel Salenzuela, 19, who also live in the house, were shot to death. Police recovered P7,000 worth of jewelry, cash and two cellular phones from the family, police said. They also shot and killed farm caretaker Melchor Escobal, 24. Michael Bautista, 19, and son-in-law Noel Salenzuela, 19.

Carmela Reyes, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Holiday in Bulacan for Ople

MALOLOS—A declaration of tax, Feb. 3, a special non-working holiday in Bulacan to mark the 78th birthday of the late senator Blas Ople. Ople, also foreign affairs secretary at the time of his death, was cited as Proclamation No. 889 as a "model to the Filipino people, especially to Bulakenyos," family and friends will celebrate Mass at the Blas Ople Learning Village Museum in Fort Bonifacio. Another Mass will be offered at the St. Anne's Shrine in Hagonoy. Senator Ople will be offered a commemorative stamp will be unveiled.

Bus falls off ravine; 6 dead

BAGUIO CITY—Eight people died while 22 others were hurt when the Ohayami Express bus they were riding in fell from a ravine in Kalinguan, Benguet on Tuesday. Vicente Tamayao, Cordillera director of the Office of Civil Defense, said the driver of the Kalinguan-bound Ohayami bus failed to steer the vehicle to safety from a curve along the Baguio-Kalinguan Road because of a mechanical defect. Among the eight fatalities were Juliet Inginieo, curator of the National Museum in Kalinguan town, and her sons, Christian Jamer, two, and Christian Mikael, five. Inginieo died while being taken to the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

Desiree Caluza and Frank Cimatu, *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Fish landing port

CITY OF CALAMBA—Rodolfo Campo Lindo Villar called on the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority to allot additional funds for the extension of the 50-meter long Bonlacan fish landing port by another 50 meters to allow bigger vessels to come in. This infrastructure improvement is expected to help boost Bonlacan's fishing and tourism industries. Villar cited Bonlacan's huge potential with its 7 islands and beautiful beaches and its fish territory away from Boracay Island.

Marlowe Hood, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Operator blamed for mishaps

CALAMBA CITY—A Laguna-based group on Monday said the private operator of the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) should be held accountable for the deaths and injuries caused by accidents inside the supposedly toll-free road. In a statement, the Road Users Protection Advocates (Ruap) said the recent series of fatal accidents involving cars on the NLEX should prompt the government to review its agreement with the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC). Ruap spokesperson Ed Bautista, including the wife of Dalisi, Zambales Mayor Jeffrey Khonghun.

Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Villar daughter jars queen

LIMAY, L.I. Pinky, only daughter of Sen. Manuel Villar and Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar, was presented as Queen of Las Piñas Festivities and Charity Fair 2006. The coronation night and dinner was held Feb. 3 at the Feast of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnacion (Our Lady of Candles), patroness of the town. Pinky's father was born in Tabon, Malabon and is now the town's Congressman, Bataan and Silang are.

Cavite gov sues 3 tabloids for libel

CALAMBA CITY—For allegedly maligning his character and reputation, Cavite Gov. Ayong Maliksi has filed a P50-million libel suit against three community papers being run by what he called as "bogus media men" in his province.

Named respondents in Maliksi's P-page complaint were Banaba publisher Isidro Carling and staffer Jimmy Ibbetson and Leonardo Olivares from Tribu, Bonty Tavares and Cupet Gandeza of Bayanihan, and Rudy Apollo Abdelle Apollo, reporter/columnist of Arturo Pacific.

"In the middle of 2004, these individuals named publishing entities whose sole objective is to destroy my reputation," he said.

Maliksi's lawyer filed the case in the assistant provincial prosecutor's office in Trece Martires last Jan. 30, 2006.

The governor said the three tabloids have "engaged in a malicious and systematic campaign to vilify (me) and the provincial government."

The governor said while he respects the freedom of the press to express public officials like him, "these tabloids cannot by any means be categorized as part of the free and legitimate press." Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luminon Bureau*

SC nullifies Meralco's 13.27¢/kWh hike in '04

From page A1

"In this case, the consumers have the right to be informed of ... Meralco's application for the increase of its generation charge," the high tribunal said.

It was the second time in as many years that the Supreme Court had nullified an increase in Meralco rates.

In June 2006, the court voided a 1.3-centavo per kWh provisional rate increase granted by the ERC to Meralco in the wake of the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC).

Voting 8-5, the Supreme Court overruled the decision of the ERC, saying that it was a product of a "blatantly and unreasonable" breach of the law.

Among the bases for the decision were Meralco's failure to publish its application for the rate hike and the ERC's failure to resolve the motion of the FDC Inc acting on Meralco's application.

Homeowners' association

The second case stemmed from a suit filed in 2000 by the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms, the Federation of Village Associations and the Federation of Las Piñas Homeowners Associations.

The petitioners claimed that the rate increase was approved without, among other things, the required publication of Meralco's amended application, which deprived the consumers of counter to counter it.

Publication is required by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Energy Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) of 2001.

In line with Epira, the ERC required all distribution utilities to file applications for the embedding of rates.

Meralco filed its application for the approval of its unbundled rates and the approval of its assets on Dec. 28, 2001.

After hearings, the ERC approved on March 28, 2003, Meralco's unbundled schedule of rates effective in the next billing cycle. The ERC also directed Meralco to stop charging the purchased power adjustments (PPA) upon effectivity of the unbundled rates.

Adjustment mechanism

The commission said any change in the cost of purchased power shall be reflected as deferred charges, which could be recovered through the Generation Rate Adjustment Mechanism (GRAM).

Meralco, at the time, claimed that the proposed generation charge, which was subsequently approved by the ERC, conformed with the generation rate formula under the implementing rules for the recovery of fuel and independent power producer costs.

In its motion, Meralco said "it would be violative of due process to require it to comply [with the publication requirement] ... [because] it would be subjected to a long and tedious process of recovering its fuel and purchased power costs."

The company said GRAM "pays for the fuel and purchased power costs to its suppliers even before it could fully collect from its customers."

GRAM allows the quarterly adjustment of the generation charge to reflect the changes in fuel and purchased power costs after a review by the ERC.

HOW'S IT GOING, GUYS? President Arroyo inspects the repairs being done on the Aurora Highway in Del Gallego, Camarines Sur. The road is a major link between the Bicol Region and the Visayas. With her are Mayor Reyes Vince (left), DPWH Bicol regional director Orlando Rivera (2nd from left) and Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte. Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. is in Malacañang's left. RYAN ROSARIO

AFP grills 5 Faeldon supporters

From page A1

Faeldon's support in the military. There are others. I believe there will be more than five. It will depend on the outcome of the debriefing," Esperon said.

Marine Private Lorenzo Gerones and Hardy Glaraga of the 807 Security Command based in Puerto Princesa City are being held at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

Three other enlisted personnel from Southern Command based quarters in Zamboanga City are set to undergoing interrogation there.

But the military refused to identify the three, saying it was not the proper time to release.

"We don't know yet if they are to be charged ... The debriefing is now being conducted by the AFP Counter Intelligence Group in Zamboanga," said Esperon.

Released mutineers

"The common denominator we're looking at is the possibility that they are among the 300 soldiers who were part of the Darwood mutiny," he said.

The 300 Magdalo soldiers occupied Oakwood in May 2003 after they struck a plea bargain with military prosecutors. They accepted a three-week detention and a pay cut for six months in exchange for the dismissal of coup-martial charges against them.

Esperon justified the interrogations, saying under military law the five soldiers could be detained even though charges had not been filed against them.

Asked by reporters what the detained soldiers had revealed so far, Esperon said results of the debriefing had not been released.

The Mediamking Gerones and Glaraga were flown to Camp Aguinaldo from Western headquarters, one of the four military camps that Faeldon reportedly visited after his Dec. 11 escapade.

The three others being interrogated were assigned to headwestern headquarters, which Faeldon was also able to penetrate despite a nationwide manhunt for him.

Links to plot probed

Esperon said the soldiers were also being investigated to determine if they were part of the supported coup plot.

"If there are indications that they are part of the plot, of the enablement, then the necessary action would be conducted by our intelligence and counterintelligence units," he said.

Esperon said Faeldon did not directly implicate the soldiers, adding that Alpuyo was researching in previous findings with Faeldon's statements.

He said pictures were also recovered from Faeldon. He did not elaborate.

"During the investigation other names may come out. There may be other findings that will lead to other arrested, and that's the focus of the Alpuyo which is very active on this," Esperon said.

Faeldon had also taken videos and pictures of himself at the Camp Crame police general headquarters in Quezon City, the Central Command headquarters in Cebu City and the Camp Aguinaldo military general headquarters itself.

He posted the videos and pictures on his website www.philpinoy.org.ph where he announced he was launching a civil disobedience campaign against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Bivas, a military prosecutor, was transferred on Wednesday from the Isafp compound to the Headquarters Support Command office inside Camp Aguinaldo.

Bivas, the lone one yet met with her family.

Eleven said military lawyers had not determined the "extent of her participation ... so they cannot pinpoint the charges against her."

Court visit

Also yesterday, the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 148 staff completed checks on 27 Magdalo members, including Faeldon, detained in separate facilities after their lawyers expressed the fear that some of the detainees may have been tortured.

"In general, everyone seems OK," said clerk of court Nenilen Tagalicod. "They seemed relaxed. I was allowed to ask whatever questions I had, though there was a (military) escort during the visit," said the lawyer.

He declined to give details before he could report to the court.

With reports from Tarra T. Quismundo and Nikko Dizon

Massive oil spill threatens white Boracay beaches

From page A1

added Santiago, chair of the Joint Congressional Power Commission.

Negrosor president Cyril C. del Callar said that 250 workers had been mobilized to undertake the cleanup which would be completed in three months.

"We are doing everything within our capability to contain the oil spill and make sure that there will be no major effects on the immediate environment," Del Callar said.

Bad weather

Del Callar blamed bad weather for the incident.

But Negrosor spokesperson Imrom Gana said that conditions had improved for a favorable cleanup in coordination with the Philippine Coast Guard and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"The Coast Guard said it is finishing on Tuesday and the weather was favorable and the winds were going in the direction of Amlanan and not to Boracay," Gana said.

Del Callar said that workers had collected almost 3,700 sacks of oil that were dumped out a temporary area for immediate disposal.

17,000 sacks

Overall, more than 17,000 sacks of contaminated materials from both the shoreline and mangroves had been collected. About 200 hectares of the total 400 hectare area of the island had been cleared of oil, he said.

Boats Barge 136 is now docked at the Iloilo Shipyard in Barangay Ahuer it was moved following the accident. Contaminated divers being removed prior to repairs.

Largest spill in RP

"This is probably the largest oil spill in the Philippines but Negrosor is underrating the damage. It hasn't reached Boracay, but we'll never know with the underwater rivers. We must remember that this is heavy oil," Augusto said.

"And this cleanup has been very slow and very primitive," he added.

He said LIF scientists had sent an investigative team and found out that 300 hectares of mangroves, rice grass and coral reefs had already been damaged.

"This is underreported in Manila but it is a big scandal in Panay," he said.

The oil spill occurred on Dec. 18 after the barge ran aground 200 meters off from Sitong, Barangay Semirara, one of three villages of Semirara Island. Oil spillage splattered 3 km of the Semirara shoreline.

195,000 liters

Semirara is part of a group of nine islands of Caluya town, Antique, at the southern tip of Mindoro. It is the site of Semirara Mining Corp., the biggest coal mine in Asia.

A Coast Guard report said the barge was being towed by a tugboat to Iriliaval Bindoro from Manilene when it was battered by strong winds and waves. It was estimated to be carrying 800,000 liters of bunker oil.

Gana said in a telephone interview that at least 195,000 liters of bunker oil were spilled in the sea.

But Santiago said Del Callar told her that only 30,000 liters spilled from the barge.

"I anticipate Senate action by asking Del Callar's and he said that Negrosor takes responsibility for the oil spill because both the anchoring and the mooring of the oil barge were Negrosor facilities and this is a Negrosor barge," she said.

"He said they have already released P5 million out of P60 million that Negrosor has appropriated for the oil spill and have sought assistance from the Coast Guard and the military," she added.

Remedial measures

Santiago, quoting Del Callar, said that only 40 hectares of mangrove life, and not 226 hectares, had been affected by the oil spill.

However, the Senate committee on environment and natural resources, headed by Sen. Pia Cayetano, is set to investigate the oil spill and base a proposed bill to increase penalties on pollutors of the country's navigable waters.

"The problem with our many existing environmental laws is that they do not provide penalties that are high enough to ensure that damages are paid to the local community and for the rehabilitation of the environment," Cayetano said in a statement.

The committee would also consider Cayetano's bill, SB 1802, which lifts the law by increase polluters to P5 million from P50,000 to P200,000. It also increases the prison term for violators from the current 30 days to one year to eight to 12 years.

Soon on sale: 1-kg LPG with built-in burner

From page A1

will have a built-in burner that could be used to cook food directly.

The introduction of the 1-kg LPG cylinders should enable even "the poorest of the poor" to avail themselves of LPG for everyday cooking, according to Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla.

He said the increase in the value-added tax (VAT) rate to 12 percent from 10 percent on Feb. 1, an 11-kg LPG cylinder now sells for between P689.20 and P946.25.

Charcoal

The high cost of LPG, Lotilla said, had pushed a number of families in resort to using alternative fuels like charcoal.

He said alternative fuels would cut into the sales of LPG dealers but consumers would benefit as they could switch to the less expensive fuels than buy soothing gas.

GOING MINI. A dealer checks out the less-selling size of LPG in three days of rising prices. JOEL SANTOS

At present, dealers sell LPG in 11-kg cylinders.

Apart from the 11-kg tanks, oil refinery Petron Corp. also sells 7-kg and 2.7-kg cylinders, while Caltex/Philippines Inc. offers 5-kg and 2.7-kg tanks.

Total Philippines Corp. has 5.3-kg and 2.7-kg cylinders, and Liquigas Philippines Corp. sells 5-kg and 2.7-kg tanks. It also has cylinders for between P500 and P2000, and a 2.7-kg tank for between P1100 and P1500.

Prices to go down

Lotilla said LPG prices would go down after March, with the end of the winter season in the western hemisphere.

"We hope demand goes down by March," he said.

Even while expecting demand and prices to decline in the next months, the DOE announced in consumer needs with the country's LPG dealers, asking them to come up with ways to help make LPG more affordable to consumers.

"They're coming back on Wednesday (Feb. 8) to tell us how they can help meet the needs of the poorest families; if they can find a way to keep prices where they are or even bring those lower," he told reporters. Another option is for oil companies to invest in smaller LPG tanks."

One option that was deemed not viable was for LPG dealers to sell only 8 kg of LPG for their existing 11-kg cylinders, he said.

The idea was jumbled as the cost of transporting a certain number of 11-kg tanks containing only 8 kg of cooking gas would be the same as that of transporting full 11-kg tanks.

Poorest of the poor

One option being considered is to have "the poorest of the poor" in every barangay go straight to the dealers for their LPG needs, Lotilla said.

This way, these households would not be subjected to the charges that middlemen impose on top of the dealer price of LPG, he said.

"But what we're trying to see is how we can implement it. We'll have something concrete by next week," he said.

To help workers cope with the impact of the higher VAT rate, the Employees Confederation of the Philippines yesterday urged Congress to hasten the passage of a law that would raise the threshold for income tax exemptions.

Reop president Rene V. Isaacs said the proposed law, which has been approved in the House committee level, was aimed at increasing the country's investment rate and creating employment for low- and middle-income earners.

Discontent

"Workers' take-home pay would not be increased to enable them to cope with rising prices of commodities," Isaacs said. "Adjusting the tax exemption is a way that would address the need without hurting the pockets of employees and businesses."

Reop chair Miguel B. Varela said the measure was needed to stem the tide of discontent and protest labor unrest.

A bill drafted by the Department of Finance seeks to exempt individuals from income tax up to P50,000 yearly. *With a report from Ahmed M. Domingo*

NEW police recruits stand at attention in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City, during ceremonies marking the Philippine National Police's 13th year.

All's well that ends well at PNP awards day

By Jocelyn R. Uy
and Lutgar A. del Prado

FOR TWO YEARS NOW, THE SOUTHern Police District (SPD) has earned the reputation of being Metro Manila's top police force.

SPD Director Chief Supt. Wilfredo Garcia credits the achievement to his men who "risk their lives to perform their jobs on the streets."

The SPD was recognized by the National Capital Region Police Office as the best police district in Metro Manila for 2005 as it marked the 10th anniversary of the Philippine National Police yesterday at Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City.

"I don't take the credit. It really belongs to them," Garcia said in an interview yesterday, adding that the increased police visibility in the seven cities of southern Metro Manila also proved effective in deterring the commission of heinous and petty crimes.

Garcia admitted that 2005 has been quite a rocky year for the SPD with violent incidents in the district like the bombing of a bus on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue on Valentine's Day that left four people dead and 40 people injured, the murder of ousted diplomat Alexa Ramos in her Makati home in April and the execution of a family in Taguig in June.

"But we solved all these crimes with the arrest of the culprits," he said, adding that SPD's crime solution efficiency was tagged at 95 percent last year.

End to controversy

In a related development, Metro Manila's most senior police official yesterday told a police district that promoting the results of the annual competition was "childish."

Nat Director Nidal Quezol clearly wanted the controversy to die down.

"Pinaresing (through the media... was childish," said Quezol, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief. "If you want us be No. 1, you should work as one and work to be No. 1."

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. had earlier protested the selection of the Manila Police District (MPD) as the top Metro Manila police force of 2005, saying the honor should have gone to the QCPD.

Quezol and Chief Supt. Renato Radovan, the head of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD), did not take up the issue with members of the committee which picked the winner.

"Supt. Radovan already said his piece and so did Mayor Belmonte, so that's the end of it," said Quezol. "I'm supposed to be the father to the men. I don't want to be seen as fighting with my sons."

POSTCRIPT TO EXPLOSION

Court employees get bomb threats

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THREE DAYS AFTER A PELLOSI EXPLOSION in front of their building on Ermita St., Manila, employees of the Court of Appeals (CA) received two bomb threats from unidentified callers early yesterday morning.

The Manila Police District's Explosives Ordnance Disposal Section (MPD EODS) reported that a court security guard received a call at around 12:20 a.m. from an unidentified man who warned about explosives planted in the building.

Another court employee received a similar phone call a few hours later prompting the police to check the building for bombs. They found nothing.

The police had earlier declared a Mcdonalds alert as a blast rocked the CA building last Monday. Authorities earlier also received a bag containing dynamite sticks and blasting caps in the bag of construction worker Eddy Rimola, a passenger of Light Rail Transit Line 2. Rimola told police the dynamite was intended for a Caltpostal project in Antipolo City. MPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong, however, downplayed the explosion as "hoax" of the building, saying it was caused by a pillbox thrown by warring street gangs.

However, a group that called itself Jihad or Tawig Bayan al Kawal-ng Pilipinas immediately claimed responsibility for the incident, according to a television news report.

The group demanded the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo, Armed Forces chief Gen. Generoso Senga, and other military officials allegedly involved in the "Hello Garci" controversy.

In a separate incident, two strange bombs were unearthed in two different sites by construction workers in Manila. A 105 mm unexploded explosives ordinance was dug up inside the Arnaiz High School campus on Jacinto Nielson avenue in Intramuros, Manila, at around 3:15 p.m. Wednesday. Yesterday morning, an 81 mm mortar was also unearthed at 7:00 morning St., Sampaloc, Manila.

The explosives were brought to the MPD headquarters for safekeeping and proper disposition.

Arroceros forest park to remain closed – for now

By Tina G. Santos

THE CONTROVERSIAL ARROceros Forest Park in Manila will remain closed despite a plea from professional artists to reopen it to the public.

Lolita Quiñones, Division of City Schools superintendent, said the park was closed for the public's safety because of the ongoing construction of a two-story building for teachers in the area.

"We're afraid that if we open it some an accident might occur and we would be held responsible," she told the business.

The park will be reopened as soon as work on the building is completed, Quiñones added.

Several professional artists had asked the city government to reopen the forest park, saying they draw inspiration from its rich foliage.

"I hope the city officials understand that and heed our plea," artist Leo Meñano said.

He added that even their livelihood has been affected by the park's closure. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of their artwork goes to Writers' Foundation, the park caretaker.

Meñano is locked in a court battle with the Manila City government. The foundation claims it has been given a 15-year contract to develop the park, but the local government said the contract is not valid.

Meanwhile, Meñano and other artists said they will join the park clean-up drive, a program initiated by Mañano, on Sunday.

Mañano president Regina Pacson had earlier accused the city government of dumping garbage like sweet scrap and old Christmas decorations inside the park.

"It could be the start of the forest's conversion to a dump," Pacson warned.

MetroBriefs

Suspected wire thief nabbed in Navotas

THE STREETS leading to the Navotas Commercial Port were alert after a suspected thief cut the electrical wires of specially designed lampposts on Mc Arthur Street Wednesday night. "We were surprised to see the lampposts lights go out. When we checked, we saw the suspect holding a bunch of electrical wires," said Willy Ferdeyo, a barangay official. The thief escaped before residents could nab him. Ferdeyo said they identified the suspect as Jun Andaya, said they decided to continue using the lights "because it's nice to look at and it represents the inner city industry." "We were supposed to bring the lights down in April or before the Holy Week for safekeeping, but now we have no choice but to buy replacement wires," he added. The suspected thief, Lito Dizon-Ko, a resident of Tanjong, Batulao City, was turned over to the police for investigation.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Makati opens world-class aqua center

THE CHAIRMAN of financial center and inaugurate today the Makati Aqua Sports Center, a P67-million world-class facility with an Olympic-sized swimming pool. "We would be inviting sports associations to try out the facility. The city would also organize swimming competitions to look for homegrown talents," said Jory Salgado, Makati Information and Communication Department chief. Located in Barangay West Rembo, right across the University of Makati, the 1,000 sq. m. swimming facility has an eight-lane, five-foot-deep Olympic-sized pool, and a smaller four-foot deep "warm-up" pool.

Darwin Belendrez

NEW RTC JUDGE

Las Piñas City Regional Trial Court Judge Salvador P. Tredoux Jr. (second from left) takes his oath of office before Supreme Court Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban. With them are members of Judge Tredoux's family.

Learn more about childhood cancer at www.mychildhasdies.com

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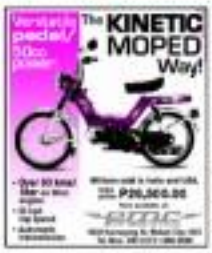


8 nabbed in QC 'jueteng' raid

By Leila A. del Puerto and Jacolyn R. Uy

SEVERAL HOURS AFTER RAIDING that his district should have been adjudged the best Metro police district in 2005, the chief of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) was ordered to relieve one of his officers for jueteng.

National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief Director Vidal Querol on Wednesday night ordered QCPD director Chief Supt. Nicasio Fadrigon to relieve Supt. Felicidad Gido, the head of the Novaliches police station, for failing to stop jueteng in the area.

Police bodies Gido's relief, a team from the NCRPO intelligence unit raided the Bulgaya Parkland Subdivision at the boundary of Fairview and Novaliches and arrested eight people who were allegedly conducting a jueteng draw.

They were identified as Jonas Sta. Alberto Nacional, Marlino Oliveros, alleged bet collectors Windfredo Orros, Rolito Victoria, Emilio Villaflor, Anna Lee Villanueva and bettor Antonio Bagano.

Supt. Soren Ramon Jr., chief of the NCRPO's Regional Intelligence Special Operations Office (RIDSO) which conducted the operations, said the suspects yielded eight pens, several lists containing jueteng bets, a calculator, and P4,349 in jueteng bets.

The suspects were placed in the custody of the RIDSO. Charges of violation of the anti-jueteng law will be filed against them at the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

Following the police's "one strike policy" on jueteng, Querol ordered Fadrigon to relieve Gido.

"I have also warned the Quezon City police District not to allow the return of jueteng," Querol said.

Al least five other cities in Metro Manila are being closely monitored after reports about the resurgence of jueteng in the area reached the police.

Camp Crame officials, meanwhile, hailed the RCPD for its swift action.

"Like we said, we are done with sitting sweetheart cases. The failure in some areas, jueteng, ligay, saw, what we'll do is to strike and strike hard," said Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson.

"This action by the RCRPO is very commendable and we expect the same from other regions," he said.

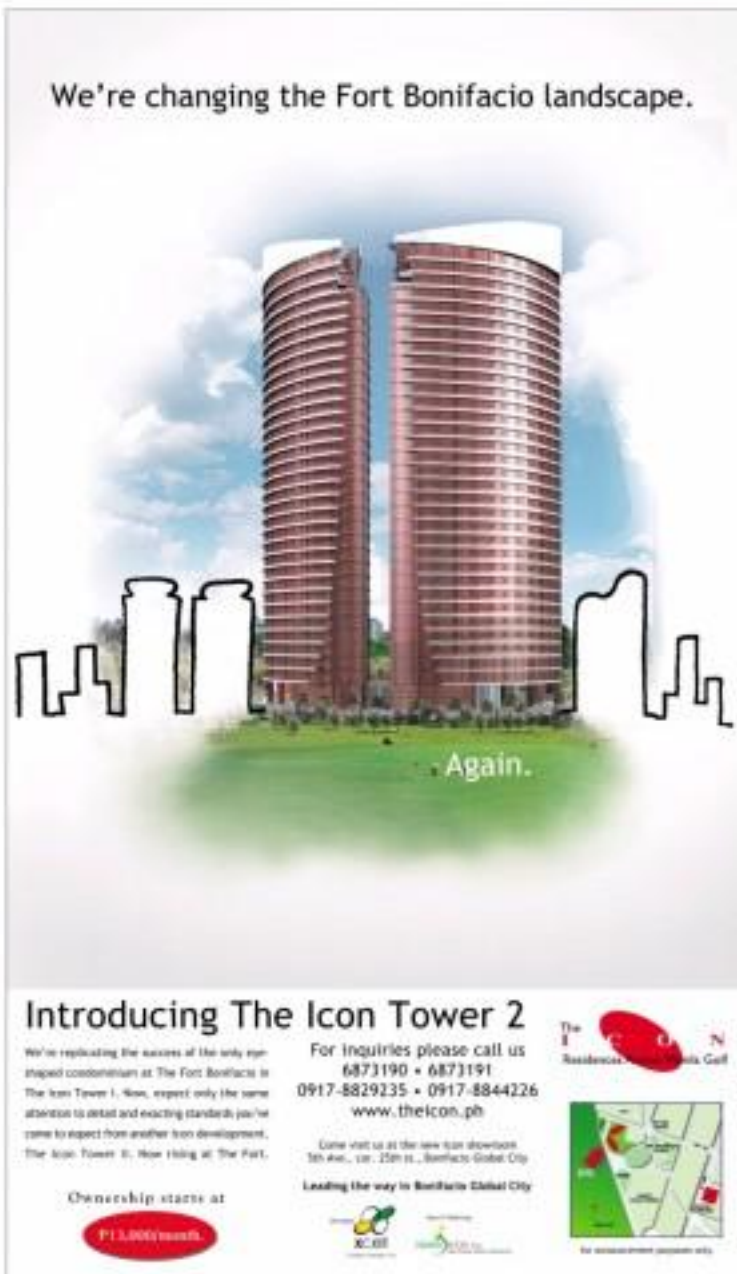
The chief of the Anti-Illegal Gambling Special Task Force said he received reports of jueteng activities in Quezon City a few days ago.

But his men had been busy operating in the countryside, said Chief Supt. Antonio Nuñez, the head of the police's anti-jueteng strike force.

"Binantuan kami, sunkan[illegible] (They beat us to it, and that's good)," he said.

The police's one strike policy in jueteng now extends to other similar forms of gambling, such as masiao and cassino in Bicolandia and video karera in Metro Manila.

Jueteng is said to be the source of millions in pesos in payoffs to local and national politicians, as well as janitor and traffic police officers. With RJ Ty



Trader eludes carjackers

By DJ Yap

A BUSINESSMAN ESCAPED BEING LIFTED as the latest "carjacking" victim in Quezon City after he sped away in panic from Acosalito wielding an elusive the other night.

Angeline Reyes, 43, was cruising along the Tandang Sora flyover on board his brand new hatchback Swift at 9:50 p.m. Wednesday when her car was stopped by a van and a car, police said.

A blue L-300 van cut him from the right, while a red Toyota Corolla blocked him at the rear, Reyes told Chief Insp. Andy Arcega, chief of the anti-carnapping unit of the Quezon City Police District.

A man alighted from the van and trained an M-16 rifle at him, Reyes said. The suspect told him: "Walang personalan. Kotse lang ang kailangan namin. Huwag personal. We just need the car."

Gripped by fear, Reyes stepped on the accelerator and sped off, leaving his attackers behind, police said.

But the suspects gave chase, following him for several kilometers. They even opened fire at him at least thrice, Reyes said.

When Reyes turned right in Regalado Avenue, the suspects, apparently having given up, went the other way.

After Reyes was shown a police file on car thieves, he positively identified a man in a photo as the one who had threatened him.

Arcega said the man, in his early 30s and heavily built, belonged to the Madrigal Carnap Group, but declined to identify him.

Warehouse yields fake toothpaste

By Margie C. Ocs

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI) seized half a million pesos worth of fake toothpaste during a raid on a warehouse in Sitomelo, Obando, San Rafaelo.

NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) agents confiscated 13,000 boxes of 50 ml tubes of counterfeit Close-Up toothpaste from the warehouse at 286 Claro St.

"This was the first time we conducted a raid on counterfeit toothpaste," NBI IPRD chief Jose Jesus Vigo said.

Charges of unfair competition are being readied against warehouse owner Alex Co, he added.

"The counterfeit products were imported from China," Vigo told reporters, explaining that many of the toothpaste boxes which showed smiling Filipino models were manufactured in China.

Agents of the NBI IPRD also seized P2 million worth of fake perfumes and cosmetics during simultaneous raids in Sitomelo earlier this month.

The NBI collected 12,000 counterfeit products and 1,470 bottles of counterfeit perfumes with the brand names Giorgio Armani, Lancôme, Guy Laroche, and Ralph Lauren from Mercedes General Merchandise outlets at the New Divisoria and Juan Luna Plaza shopping malls. The owners, Kevin and Michael Co, are facing charges of trademark infringement and unfair competition.

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molondres

Key Cabatu hits rescue Painters

Young standout forces OT, then nails winning basket as Rain or Shine takes Game 1

By Jaymee W Pepe

THE VETERAN RAIN OR SHINE CREW FOUND a young hero yesterday.

Junjun Cabatu buried a jumper at the buzzer to lift Rain or Shine to a 70-68 overtime victory over Welcoat for Greats in Game 1 of the 10th Unwan Cup title playoffs at the San Andres Gym.

Cabatu, who nailed a three-pointer to force the extra period at 60-all, finished with a team-high 20 points as the Elasto Painters took a head start in the best-of-five series.

"He really wanted to win," said coach Caloy Garcia of the La Salle standout, whose father Sonny was known for anything but his shooting when he played for the YP team and later in the PBA in the 1980s.

"We had several options in the last play but I just wanted it to be Junjun when I got the ball."

GAME 1 TONIGHT (San Andres Gym)
7:30 p.m.—Antiques Gold Awards
9:30 p.m.—Magnolia vs Barangay Ginebra (7-Eleven)

Earlier, Sonny Goose started to let Lanzon in the second half to subdue Unwan Cup Greats, 87-81, and bag third place.

Lanzon shot 20 of his 24 markers in the last two quarters to lead the Textile past the Renaissance, who missed the services of Joseph Yeo, who was suspended for the match-up.

The Painters trailed early in overtime, 68-66, after the Wizards opened the extension with a 6-0 spurt. But the seasoned Painters got a big boost from their young guns and closed in at 69-66.

Eugene Tan nailed a triple with 24.8 seconds to finally put the Painters on top, 70-68.

Mark Isip jumper tied the game at 60 with 6.9 ticks left, until Cabatu struck on the next play.

Led by Cabatu, Eyeta Ilas, Marlo and Hoopy Arcilla, the Painters took a 103-93 edge in the fourth quarter before the Wizards orchestrated a 15-2 run to grab the upperhand at 57-60.

Cabatu then tied the game at 60-all with a triple with 20.6 ticks left.

The scores:

First Game

GRANNY GOOSE 89—Lanzon 39, Cruz 15, Lewis 8, Orjalo 7, Santos 6, Suerte, Arnaiz 6, Ouano 5, Estrada 4, Gaviola 3, Mhot 2, Salenga 1, Ferrer 1, Corona 0.

UNWAN CENTRO 81—Hugnatan 19, Dela Pena 17, Gaco 11, Lanzon 8, Rivera 8, Palacio 8, Nicolas 8, Andaya 2, Segundo 2, Raymundo 2, Ramirez 0.

Quarters: 18-20; 32-42; 52-58; 70-81

Second Game

WELCOAT PAINTS 70—Cabatu 20, Tan 11, Ilas Eyeta 10, Dario 8, Orbeta 7, Suyom, Tenorio 5, Hoopy 3, Agbayani 2, Mhot 2, Arcilla 2, Mendoza 0.

MAGNOLIA 68—Wilkins 21, Zarate 13, Valenzuela 12, Mendoza 7, Isip 5, Reyes 4, Ala 3, Ong 1, Jornal 0, Arellano 0, Nocino 0.

Quarters: 15-13; 31-29; 47-44; 60-60; 70-68

MAGNOLIA'S Andy Wilkins pulls down the rebound off Rain or Shine's Jay-R Reyes.

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Table tennis president Valbuena under fire

A BLOCKBOC OF TABLE TENNIS COUNTRY PLAYERS, club officers and regional directors have asked the Philippine Olympic Committee to oust Table Tennis Association of the Philippines (Ttaap) president Hector Valbuena from the country's sole ticket to the Olympics.

Led by Ttaap directors Ian Perez (Region X), Godofredo Dy (Region X) and Mon Ginard (Baguio), the group which calls itself the Council for Reform is to formal the POC in a petition letter on Thursday that their aim is to question if then the Ttaap policy-making body of the Ttaap regional directors.

"We're just waiting for his term to end last year, but we're surprised to learn that Valbuena was reelected without informing the recognized clubs and regional directors," said Cheryl Antolihao, a former Ttaap secretary general and spokesman of the group.

"We just found out that they held an election without a quorum because three were no regional directors and club officers who were present there."

But Valbuena defended the claims of the ousted group, saying he was legally given a third mandate by the Ttaap regional directors.

Valbuena explained that Antolihao' loose of confidence and that he wasn't recognized as Ttaap president because former Ttaap chief Bobby Ico was still the association's head as he hadn't submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The group's bitter was manifested by POC special assistant to the president Go Teng Kok on Thursday and the issues is expected to be tackled by the POC arbitration committee next week. —Marc Anthony Reyes

Barako, Giants seek clinchers again today

AFTER BEATING TEA championship ties for different reasons, Welcoming Red Bull Barako and Thurmalyn Quinto go for the clincher score in their respective semifinal series today in the Neo-Bliz Coffee PBA Fiesta Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Import James Penton returns for the Red Bull Barako when they try to nail down the decisive fourth win against the Barangay Ginebra Kings at 6:45 p.m. in search of their best of seven duel.

The Purefoods Giants, who humbled away the potential winning basket by the dying seconds of Game 3, also go for the clincher again at 9:00 p.m. against the seven-day-do Air24 Express.

"This time, it will be a much tougher game versus Barako," said Ginebra coach Joe Tangcay, con after the Kings pulled off a 97-93 win over the Barako, with Penny serving a one-game suspension as a result of two technical fouls in Game 3.

Red Bull head coache were three weight after dropping the opener of the series in overtime.

Ginebra import Chris Porter will have to work some harder after turning in 27 points and 26 rebounds in Game 3, while Eric Menk and Rommel Adducul have to fight their way into the paint with Penton.

"We'll try to take away their post offense and let them hit from the outside if they can," said Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao.

"You have to take a risk by either guarding the post and allowing the three, or create more space for them by crowding out—which could make you vulnerable to last big men."

Swiss-or-sink match

The Express, on the other hand, will be playing their backs against the wall in front of their fans after beating out San Miguel Beer and Talk 'N Text and avoiding elimination Wednesday night.

"This team takes an emotion and energy," said Air24 coach Bo Perasol. "It's always an advantage for us to play our best when our against the wall. But the fatigues are still around this time mainly because of back.

After moving within a point at 1:00:00 the Giants had the potential game-winner in their hands in Game 3, but Ginebra Ego, who was key rookie Jeff Hardwick dashed, threw it away by fumbling a pass from Eric Reyenoso in order to ring possession to Kings. —John Nieneres

Taekwondo head blames test center for drug shame

By Musong R. Castillo

PHILIPPINE TAEKWONDO ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT Robert Aventajado yesterday breathed an "unclean" the drug-testing procedures of the Philippine Center for Sports Medicine and blamed the agency for Esther Mae Sinigaan's thrashing the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) test recently.

Aventajado said that while Singsuan's in POM test on Nov. 22, the Wada-accredited clinic in Beijing, China, later found the taekwondo gold medalist of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games to be positive for diuretics.

The substance is banned by the Wada because it can shield steroid or performance-enhancing drugs.

But POM head Dr. Raul Canlas said that the country has been in place for the past seven editions of the SEAG and that no controversial incident had ever happened on the sports athletes.

"The POM held a series of seminars for national coaches six months before the Games," Canlas told the Inquirer over the phone. "Those seminars were attended by many [latest athletes], and the [Singsuan] was assured [about taking banned drugs]. I have her coach's word."

Canlas declined to identify Singsuan's coach since many who attended the seminar (he said he has kept the names) told their players not to "take anything unusual."

Singsuan, who insists she had made an "honest mistake," would lose her gold medal in taekwondo if the Wada's decision is finalized in the next few days.

The banned substance was found to a weight reducing tea that Singsuan took last October so she would make the weight for the heavyweight category.

Meanwhile, Edu Rigol, the conditioning and strength coaching coach of the national taekwondo team, said that Singsuan did not fail anyone she took a brand of herbal drinking tea that is rich in diuretics.

The skinny taekwondo team was quartered at the Ultra from Nov. 7 last year until April's with Christmas... a health advisor, but not a full-time employee of the PSA—took care of the team's nutrition requirements.

In a related development, PSA vice president Hung Chung Hong will fly to South Korea soon to attend the World Taekwondo Federation meeting and at the same time close the case of Singsuan before the executive board of which he is a member.

Hong noted in the WTF can cause suspension, and Singsuan's case would merit a two-year ban from local and international competition.

IN THE EYE OF STORM: Esther Mae Singsuan (left) exchanges dirty words her Indian foe in the SEAG finals. —

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM
Financial Center, Pasay City, PHILIPPINES 1308

PHYSICAL RESOURCES DISPOSAL COMMITTEE
INVITATION TO BID

The GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM invites interested parties who want to negotiably accept/grant an offer to purchase/grant for the sale of the following: GSIS-PRDC Lot No. 1, Block 1, Phase 1 of the Subdivision Project (C-2005 as 2005 TCT, at the Western Bicutan Complex, Level 1, Central Block, GSIS Headquarters Building, Pasay City. A pre-bidding conference would be held on February 14, 2006 at 10 AM (Philippine time).

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	MIN. BID
One (1) unit	Steel Frame	Philamcom Building, Wright Ave., Pasay City	P2,025,000.00

The above item may be inspected at the Philamcom Building, Colgate Avenue, Pasay City during office hours. For inquiries, you may call Engr. Thelma A. Cruz at 8 (632) 8-7-4-1-1-1 and/or (632) 8-7-4-1-1-1 and look at the Physical Management Department, Level 1, GSIS Headquarters, Financial Center, Pasay City. Interested bidders may secure copies of terms/conditions of Buyer's Proposal/Offer to Purchase (OTP) at the Cashier's Office.

Duly accredited brokers are entitled to a commission of three percent (3%) of the total amount of the bid. Manager's Check or Cashier's Check shall be in the name of GSIS-PRDC.

The GSIS-PRDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defect in any bid and to accept the bid most advantageous to the GSIS. The decision of the GSIS-PRDC is final and shall not be subject to appeal.

(Sgd.) ERIC RAMAT-ZERRUDO
Chairperson

Accessory Manufacturers
Sell your Products in the USA
At Retail Prices
Own a US Retail Business
WorldMart
GIFTS & ACCESSORIES

WorldMart the accessory section of Hanabiya Furniture is a fantastic brand new business model which Allows YOU to sell your products Direct to the Consumer without the liability, cost or involvement of owning risky retail factory stores. Currently we have around 20 salespersons from Manila, Pampanga and Cebu that have already Joined HomeMart and WorldMart.
The first of 10 stores will open in Dallas Texas On May 6th 2006
We still have space for a further 20 accessory manufacturers
Checkout www.uptrendworld.com and www.homemart-furniture.com this is your opportunity to sell your products at retail prices in the USA and own your own US retail business.
For more information Contact
roy@uptrendworld.com or
Tel. UpTrend Cebu (032) 2728904

Pro-Am open to Asian Tour bets

JUNE INGUMAN AND THE FOUR OTHER Filipino pros who made it to this year's Asian Tour may still join the Sin Emina Manila National Pro-Am on Feb. 7-11 at Riviera's League.

Ingumam, who qualified for this year's Asian Tour after a distinguished stint as an amateur, has been a participant in the annual event since 2001 with his brothers, Jonathan and the pro.

This year, however, Jerie has to team up with an amateur with an index handicap of 5 or higher in the Feb. 9-11 tournament.

Angelo Que, Gerald Rosales, Frankie Minoza and Antonio Deliarte Jr. also made it to this year's Asian Tour. Like Ingumam, they may tap into some extra dollars of 5 or higher as partners in the event presented by U Bix Corp., chair Jeri Bravo which makes a record pot of P1.7 million and two Epson Inspiron 9e Indoor prizes.

Minoza is expected to miss today's deadline, however, since he is based among the rookies in the Johnnie Walker Classic in Australia on Feb. 9-12.

"Everybody is welcome, for as long as everybody complies with the rules of the tournament," said Bravo, who co-chairs the executive committee with Benny Cojuco, the president of the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Defend Cordado said Mr. Tanseco is on a winning for a historic third straight victory.

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOODAUTO CORP'N
Pasay City

NOTICE OF CONDEMNING SALE THROUGH AUCTION

LOT NO.	NAME OF WAREHOUSE / LOCATION	TOTAL CBM OF THE LOT INCLUDING LAND	MINIMUM STORAGE FEE	FLOOR TAX PER SQ. M. INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION (Per Floor)
1				
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8				
9				
10				

Auction Rules:
1. All Bidders (If Natural Persons) must be of legal age and possess valid ID's
2. All bidders must be registered
3. Bidders must register and pay the registration fee of P1,000.00
4. Bidders must be present at the time of the bidding
5. Bidders must pay the full amount of their bid on the day of the auction
6. Bidders must pay the storage fee and floor tax before the auction
7. The Corporate Auction Committee reserves the right to reject any or all bids

	AUCTION DATE	TIME	VENUE
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

The National Food Authority, Region IV reserves the right to reject any or all offers, to waive any defect in the bidding, and to accept the offer most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) [illegible]
Asst. Regional Manager

Milo Marathon Tagbilaran leg fires off Sunday

MORE THAN 4,000 RUNNERS ARE EXPECTED at the morning line when Tagbilaran City holds the 10K elimination leg of the National Milo Marathon for the first time on Sunday.

Tagbilaran will be the country's biggest and longest running foot race to staging what is actually the second leg of the qualifying series in its maiden visit to the picturesque island of Bohol.

Slots in the grand finale to be held in Metro Manila on Dec. 10, plus the lion's share of the cash pool of P1.6 million reward to the top three finishers in the 21K men's and women's events.

Organizers said prizes will also be given out to the top 10 finishers in the 10K bracket and the top three 5K age group sets of the monthly event held in partnership with Cebu Pacific, Supreme Pork Hotel Bohol, Mobile and Metro Bus.

Rafael Cox, Nova Constantino will be the main big guns for the 21K event, while Tagbilaran Mayor Dan Lim and Vice Gov. Julio Cesar Herrera will await all the runners in the 5K and 10K races.

National sports commissioner Ambrosio de Leon will lead the Milo caravan.

Milk jackets, caps, basketballs, a cell phone and P1,000 cash will be raffled off in race day.

Local organizers Dionisio Balite, a member of the Bohol provincial board, and Joel Rosales are advising all participants to be at the starting area before 5 a.m. on race day for the 6:30 a.m. firing.

The kick-off leg in Kidapawan City last Sunday drew 4,465 runners, and Mike Sports Events executive Pia Cruz-Dingcong said they are targeting about 10,000 participants in this season's 10 legs, including the 42K grand finale.

Atienza-La Salle poker slated

THE FIRST Atienza-La Salle Poker Challenge, billed as "Mano-a-Cuano Poker Tournament," has been set for Feb. 19 at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City. Registration is at P 10,000 per contestant, the most prime tournament which will be held under the auspices of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. The meeting open to all players of the two schools. For inquiries, call 891-1-8000.

ROBERTO: Equivalent to 4-under 68

Roberto, Korean pace Southern Ladies

LORA ROBERTO AND KORBAN CRYSTAL Chin fired 4-under par 68s yesterday for 54-hole totals of 206 to pace the Midstar scoring spurts to share the lead at the start of the 42nd Southern Ladies Open in Manila Southwoods, Biñan, Laguna.

Roberto, spearhead of the Manila Southwoods squad, finished solid pairing from at the Del Monte Golf Club here, making five birdies inside eight feet to outdistance Angeles on the par-3 No. 7.

"It will be a question of putting since the surface is difficult," said Roberto, making a second success in three years after sailing the Mercedes edition of the pro-am event in 2004. "The greens are quite fast very tricky."

Roberto and Chin took a one-point lead over another Korean, Park Sung-hyun, at the 54-hole event sponsored by Premier Corp., DHL Worldwide Express/WWW Express, Cepsa Gasy and Sun Bridesmaids Int'l. Another

The two Koreans equaled their handicap of the course, having stayed here for months, in a bid to dominate the event.

Others four Sea, one of the veterans came through with a 69 to share fifth place with Roberto.

Thirteen like Perez came through with 69 points like Jocelyn Delgado to lead the charge of the youth brigade while Crystal Imperial, another juggler, and Children Banda fired 70 point apiece under the scoring system that gives 4 points for a birdie, 3 for par, 2 for bogey and 1 point for double-bogey.

Ana Milena had 31 points while 2002 champion Lina de Guzman made 30 like Ayaa Mae Wang, Opan Rodriguez, Anya Dacanay and Cassandra Ann Villaroman.

Claudine Tawtio shot 40 points for a 6 point lead in Class A over Rose Gutierrez, Mina Official and Judey Tan scored 32 points each to share the Class B lead; Joyce Duque and Bernadette Jalocjoc each fired 34 points to share the way to Class C, while Norma Villanueva led Class D with 26 points.

S'woods PAL Interclub top pick

BIÑAN CITY—MANILA SOUTHwoods and Luisita are the teams to watch when the Philippine Airlines interclub golf tournament flies off in three single courses here later this month.

Defending champion Manila Southwoods is favored to win its second straight men's championship in the 54th Interclub battle on Feb. 22-25 at the Ayo Golf and Country Club and the Palos Verdes Golf and Country Club.

The tournament, considered as the country's national clubs championship, actually begins Feb. 17 with the staging of the 19th Juniors Interclub competitions at the Luisita Golf and Country Club, said at Spokesperson Lourdes Ignacio to explain its shift: construction Jr. since this is the event limited to players who are at least 50 years old.

GREAT

The traditional hitting of ceremonial drives on Feb. 16 will officially start the biennial championship that 1961 launched in 1948.

There has 71 teams have signed up for the Seniors Interclub.

An international field of 72 clubs are lined in the concession men's regular event.

ABS-CBN International, Airbus, Boeing, DKIT, Jerry 92.3, Royal Caribbean International, People Asia magazine, Premier Wine and Spirits, Rocky Perpex, and UMPA are the major sponsors. Partners Travelers, Eli Emerald Engines and Radio Mindanao Network are the corporate backers, while 96.3 Wilcrk, Luxury Park Hotel and Asia Brewery are the other supporters.

Caraballeng is expected to challenge rider Michael Ribal-led Manila Southwoods for supremacy in the regular Championship division.

Other titles to be disputed in both the regular and Seniors events are the Founders, Sportswriters and Petrosiblip Divisions.

SPORTSWATCH

Ateneo Basketball League

THE 2006 season of the Ateneo Basketball League will be ongoing until March 19. There are 150 teams in 24 divisions with player ages ranging from 7 to 60 years old. Games are held on weekends at the division sites in Manila, Rizal, Ilocos, Mindoro, Cebu, Bicol, and Davao. For more information, please visit www.ateneobasketball.com or contact Chad Palermo, director-MPD, Inc. at 426-2852, 0917-6333178 or e-mail at chad@basketball.com.ph. Principal sponsors of ABL 2006 include Swagman Chocolate, Cherifer, Safeguard, San Miguel Beer and Mother Dirt.

Makati derby starts Feb. 8

A GUARANTEED prize of P200,000 will be at stake in a special 2-mile derby on Feb. 8 at the all-new Bulletin Publications Sponsor is still filling Derby Ave. Time hosted by the Turf Sports and Amusement Corp., the event is open to horses in the 3-year-old last year, should be listed 81 address. Entry fee is P5,000. Meanwhile, the race schedule at Summer Solstice 8-race derby will be on April 29, 30, May 2, 4, 6, 11 and 13. It will also be hosted by Uno Kilusa, Rudy Salud and William Go (0917) 532 9696-2640 and (02) 893 4013.

PCC derby

FEATURED

THE 6-RACEcards of cockers/runners today at Pasay City Cockpit will be a 6-race derby featuring more than 80 fights. Derby hosts Remulad and Sister Villarosa, who are both members of the Pasay Cockpit Racehorsemen Association (PCCA), said P150,000 is at stake in the event sponsored by Singapore Consultancy 2006 Arrenog Racing Association Team Manufacturers, Libo Basay, Solid Security, Walter Villanueva, Cito Barcenas, Rodrigo Claro, Jerry Valenzuela, Hijada Bigas, Boy Layug and Bobby Sevilla. Two more 4-cockers are set on Feb. 10 & 24. Reservations are by interclubs and call (0917) 534 PCCA, (02) 843-1888, 843-1196 and 890-6760.

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(2)Chito—Jewel Cabanilla (5, Mon Jean) (6) (3)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (4)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (5)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (6)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (7)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (8)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (9)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (10)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (11)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (12)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (13)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (14)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (15)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (16)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (17)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (18)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (19)Ricky Nicolas—Ricky Nicolas (4, Ricky Nicolas) (5) (20)Ricky 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PHCC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

MAKATI (SPORTS) CLUB, INC.
NOTICE OF AUCTION SALE

STOCKHOLDER	ADDRESS	NO. NO.
1. Times Sports and Insurance Co., Inc. (1001)	3/F Bldg. 1001-F Gil Calvo Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City	A-1007
2. Centennial Realty Corporation (0247)	200 Col. Bonifacio, 2632 Asia Tower, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	A-1008
3. Mayuga Realty M. Reality (0218)	Mayuga Realty Club Bldg. Ayala Ave., Makati City, 1209	A-0247
4. Alkansya Philippine Corporation (1409)	3/F, Pentol Bldg., Avocado Rd., PT Taguig, Metro Manila (NCR)	A-0290
5. Makuta Marine Commodities (1502)	2/F Mr. Generosity M. Sison Navigator Promise Corporation, 3/F, Tower Towers, 210 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	A-0199
6. Maria Nenita E. Cleriso (0007)	48 Doña Juana Townhouses, C. Raymundo Avenue, Rodriguez, Pasig City, *977	A-0201
7. Carmona Mktg. Company (1167)	9/F, 10 East Service Road South Super Highway Parañaque City	A-0179
8. Marvin S. Marin (0998)	Marvin and Associates, Inc., 9/F,204, Madrid Cinema Square Tower, Pasong Tamo, Makati City 1231	A-409
9. Lolo P. Nepomuceno (0739)	62 Galaxy St., Bel-Air II Village, Makati City *1209	A-940
10. Consolidated Industrial Gases (1-1-1950)	1 Pinatubo St Filipino Subd Cainta Rizal	A-1120
11. Shamrock Management & Development Corporation (0981)	Jade Mktg Incorporated, 3662 Kalayaan St., Makati City	A-1158
12. Ernesto S. Feleo(m-7020)	16, Joaquin St. Corinthian Gardens Quezon City	A-607
13. Rudy S. Lobos & Associates (0925)	Rm. 111 Gabriel Bldg., 1138 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City	A-0750
14. Hector Reyes (0856)	La Frangipha Cond., 270 Jesus Dulce Salcedo Vill, Makati City	A-360
15. RFM Corporation(0010)	11 Kalaw cor North Techa Mkts City	A-1330
16. Hermogenes Management Services (0980)	12-16, Adversarium Bldg. 1600, P.Guevara St., Sta Mesa, Manila City	A-0257
17. Mel Hidalgo & Management (1001)	12-16, Adversarium Bldg. 162 L.P Leviste St., Salcedo Vill, MKt City	A-1164
18. Dynamic E. Realties (0120)	213 Sen. Manuel Street, Navotas, Mabl Manila	B-104
19. La Compania Paterna De Filipinos (0240)	9000 Abejo St. Makati City	B-304
20. Commercial Investment Phils., Inc. (1000)	3/F, Tejero Place, Ermita Ave. (Regan Center) Pasay City	B-1083
21. Felix Sarte (1010)	Embassy of Japan, 2627 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	B-951
22. Alex M. Villareal (0340)	12 Lennon St. Valle Verde II Pasig City	B-362
23. Philippine Tech (C) (1419)	1064-B Rodriguez Jr. Ave. Bagumbayan Quezon City	B-465
24. Union Insurance Society of Canton, Ltd. (0330)	7/F, Gotesco Bldg., 226 Salcedo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	B-1166

This auction sale will be held on (2) February 2006 at 10:00 A.M. at the Club's Clubhouse Premises.

The announcement also serves as a notice and demand to the registered/stated holders concerned that the auction of said shares may be avoided if they pay the overdue accounts at anytime during office hours before the auction sale.

ROSE [illegible]
Corporate Secretary

(P) - February 3, 2006

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO. DC2006-01-0003

ON THE MINIMUM RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY OVER THE WHOLESALE ELECTRICITY SPOT MARKET AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE PHILIPPINE ELECTRICITY MARKET CORPORATION IN RELATION TO THE PREPARATION, ADOPTION AND RULES FOR APPROVAL OF THE PRICE DETERMINATION METHODOLOGY

WHEREAS, under Section 30 of Republic Act No. 9136 otherwise known as the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA), the Department of Energy (DOE) is mandated to establish the wholesale electricity spot market ("WESM") composed of the minimum functions specified;

WHEREAS, in accordance with their functional role of the implementing rules and regulations of the EPIRA ("IRR"), the DOE is mandated to oversee and establish the appropriate market design and governance structure of the wholesale electricity spot market;

WHEREAS, in accordance with Rule 6 Section 6(a) of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the EPIRA ("IRR"), the DOE is mandated to oversee and establish the appropriate market design and governance structure of the wholesale electricity spot market;

WHEREAS, in accordance with Rule 6 Section 6(b) of the IRR, Section 30 of the EPIRA further provides that the DOE is responsible for the formulation of the detailed rules for the WESM ("WESM Rules") jointly with the electric power industry participants and the constitution of the independent market operator which shall be responsible for the preparation for the implementation of the WESM in accordance with the WESM Rules;

WHEREAS, on 23 June 06, 2006, the DOE, with the active participation of electric power industry participants, issued Department Circular No. 2006-06-0001 promulgating the WESM Rules, consistent with the provisions of Section 30 of EPIRA that:

(a) Provides the overall market governance principles and promote a level playing field for all electric power industry participants; and

(b) Provides clear principles among others, governing:

i. establishing the merit order dispatch methodology for each time period;

ii. determining the market clearing price for each time period;

iii. administering the metering, reading, billing and settlement of transactions in the market which includes accounts security and confidentiality and dispute resolving rights as the participants, surveillance and assessment of compliance of the participants with the rules and the formation of the interconnected electricity spot market governing body;

iv. establishing the procedures for the market operation in system interruptions; and

v. amending the rules;

WHEREAS, in accordance with the DOE circular and the Interconnection Group Market Operator ("IGMO") and the incorporation of the Philippine Electricity Market Corporation ("PEMC");

WHEREAS, Section 30 of EPIRA states that the WESM Rules shall provide the mechanism for determining the price of electricity in the WESM based on the actual hourly demand and supply of electricity;

WHEREAS, Section 30 of EPIRA provides further that the price determination methodology contained in the WESM Rules shall be subject to approval of the Energy Regulatory Commission ("ERC");

WHEREAS, on 15 November 2004, the DOE authorized the PEMC to file with the ERC the Initial Price Determination Methodology ("PDM") for the approval of the ERC, and to comply with all directives of the ERC in relation to the PDM;

WHEREAS, there is a need to clarify the scope of PEMC's authority to act on behalf of the DOE in relation to the preparation, adoption and filing for approval of the PDM and the ERC pursuant to the DOE's commitment regarding the design and structure of the WESM;

NOW, THEREFORE, premises considered, the DOE hereby adopts the Department Circular No. 2006-01-0001 and it is hereby directed by PEMC in exercising the authority of the PEM:

Section 1. Objective of Wholesale Electricity Spot Market. Consistent with its mandates under Section 30 of EPIRA and, more particularly, Rule 6, Section 3(a) of the IRR, the DOE adopts the 1 WESM Design and Rules that is intended to establish a competitive, efficient, transparent and reliable market for electricity which:

(a) Is not driven by fuel costs but by the principles of economic efficiency;

(b) Creates a level playing field among participants within the spot market;

(c) Does not allow any participant to exercise market power;

(d) Treats participants granted non-discriminatory access to the power system;

(e) Provides accommodation for ancillary services and other services that may be provided; and

(f) Encourages investment.

Section 2. Components of Wholesale Electricity Spot Market. The following key components constitute the design of the WESM:

(a) Pricing

i. Based on the market design rules, the method and procedures for determining the price and other electricity market parameters are contained in the wholesale electricity spot market;

ii. The main objectives of the pricing method are to –

1. Balance supply and demand;
2. Provide the proper incentives, both short term and long term, for the investors and market through the correct pricing signals;
3. Allow efficient use of limited power; and
4. Manage congestion

(b) Scheduling and Dispatch

i. The dispatch mechanism of determining the dispatch schedule for all facilities, which schedules shall be used by the system operator in providing dispatch signals to the generation facilities and being prescribed to the transmission provider;

ii. It accepts certain specified actions, such as pricing (purchase negative) and interconnection capacity and constraints (bids) to be implemented dispatch;

iii. In order to implement the dispatch schedule, there must be the Load Dispatch Centers named operators and system operations. The market design establishes the procedures, processes of system operations to ensure the minimum capacity and system operation to coordinate their functions in relation to the WESM;

iv. The operation coordination is emphasized by the facilities' interconnection and maintenance of the interconnection assets and the associated electricity industry is controlled by a single entity (PEMC Vs. NGMC/IGC), and thereby the market commissioner established in accordance with Republic Act No. 9136.

(c) Billing and Settlement

The market design should specify the procedures for determining the total settlement amounts to be paid by the market participants for the transactions by virtue of wholesale electricity spot market activities and procedures for verifying and issuance of payment and market invoices to be released to the market operators and the market participants, as well as invoicing and collections.

(d) Market Administration Governance

i. This governance of the market contemplates the processes by which decisions are made and implemented in relation to wholesale electricity spot market to ensure the attainment of the market's objectives;

ii. This governance must be limited to, the following :

1. The necessary and necessary administrative steps may be authorized to participants in the spot market;
2. Is used effective framework for the resolution of disputes among market participants;
3. Provides adequate and transparent processes for the participants to implement the changes to the market design and rules in accordance with the Market Design Specification Model (the "MDSM").

The MDSM shall contain technical annexes to the market design documents and principles contained in the WESM Rules, particularly those contained in WESM Rules 3.3 to 3.15, as follows:—

i. WESM Rule 3.3 – Market Network Model, Trading Nodes and Pricing Zones;

ii. WESM Rule 3.4 – Ancillary Services;

iii. WESM Rule 3.5 – Market Trading Intervals and Timetable;

iv. WESM Rule 3.6 – Submission of Offers, Bids and Data;

v. WESM Rule 3.7 – Market Dispatch Algorithm and Model;

vi. WESM Rule 3.8 – Market Procedures;

vii. WESM Rule 3.9 – Scheduling and Dispatch Implementation;

viii. WESM Rule 3.10 – Treatment of Load Shedding and Market Generation; and

ix. WESM Rule 3.15 – Determination of Network Losses.

Except for the MDSM, all the other components or elements of the WESM as described in Section 2 hereof are considered integral parts of the design and structure of the market and, thus, PEMC shall forward them to the regulator and evaluate if there are requirements or elements without the prior approval of the DOE or as the necessity pursuant to any amendment to the EPIRA or the IRR. However, PEMC shall have the discretion to implement any minor issue or question from the public, the DOE or any other government agencies as regards the minor/IGM components of market design.

Section 4. DOE Responsibility. As mentioned by the authority granted to PEMC under Section 1 above, the DOE shall remain responsible for ensuring that the market design and structure, as embodied in the WESM Rules, shall enhance the objectives of the wholesale electricity spot market stated in Section 1 hereof.

Section 5. No amendment in respect of Autonomy. Nothing in this Department Circular shall be construed to amend, suspend, or repeal any of the responsibilities or liabilities arising or responsibilities already provided and provided under the EPIRA, its implementing rules and regulations ("Issues"), or the duties mandated by prevailing laws and/or issues or question from the public, the DOE or any other government agencies as regards the minor/IGM components of market design.

This Department Circular shall take effect immediately after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation and shall remain in effect until otherwise revoked.

For Bacolod, Taguig, Metro Manila, January 23, 2006.

RAPHAEL P.M. LOTILLA
Secretary

(P) - February 3, 2006

SPORTS

CLEVELAND Cavaliers' LeBron James drives to the basket against the Charlotte Bobcats. AP/AFP

James does it all as Cavs rip Nets

NEW YORK—LEBRON JAMES RECORDED HIS THIRD TRIPLE-DOUBLE of the season and seventh of his career to inspire the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 91-83 victory over the New Jersey Nets on Wednesday, extending their winning streak to seven games.

James logged 20 points, pulled down 11 rebounds and dished out 10 assists in front of the home fans to claim their first win over the Eastern powerhouse.

Drew Gooden contributed 21 points and six rebounds as the Cleveland crane while Sasha Pavlovic had 14 points.

Vince Carter bagged a game-high 29 points for New Jersey. Richard Jefferson added 19 and Jason Kidd 14 but the Nets could not follow up their impressive win over league-leading Detroit on Tuesday, absorbing their fifth loss in six games.

The team James bonded into the final 12 minutes deadlocked at 62-62.

In Indianapolis, Peja Stojakovic scored 20 points and grabbed 13 rebounds on his home debut in leading the Indiana Pacers to a 103-79 rout of the Los Angeles Lakers.

In Auburn Hills, Richard Hamilton logged 21 points and Tayshaun Prince added 20 as the Detroit Pistons routed the Minnesota Timberwolves, 92-74.

Meanwhile, Australian forward Andrew Bogut of Milwaukee and Dwight Howard of Orlando led a list of 19 players selected for the Rookie Challenge to Houston as part of the NBA All-Star weekend on Feb. 17. Bogut was the No. 1 draft choice in 2005 and Howard had that honor in 2004. Reuters

NOTE: Sports will air the Cleveland-Miami game at 9 a.m. with a replay at 8 p.m.

Officiating, 'suspension' rule hit

CLEAN LIVING

Hyando B. Tiago

FOR THE BETTER PART OF THE 2005-2006 season, fans of the Philippine Basketball Association have started casting hurt to watch the ongoing Asia Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference, a good sign for the beleaguered play-for-pay league which has been suffering from dwindling attendance the last two years.

But for several fans the overheard upsurge in attendance would deteriorate for two reasons: One, the mounting complaints against sloppy officiating and two, the new rule to terminate suspension on a player following his ejection on two technical fouls.

On the matter of sloppy officiating, PBA commissioner Noli Eala should not only fire his underlings answering the references for always spoiling them and honors. He should also punish those who commit dire mistakes in the crucial stages of the semifinal series so that the public won't suspect that these whistlemisters are under the influence of unscrupulous people.

Regarding the automatic suspension slapped on a player ejected on two technical fouls, many say, and I agree, that this rule is ambiguous and could be interpreted and/or understood in more ways than one.

As Ball coach Yeng Guiao said (on the one-game suspension of import Jimmy Oliver on two technicals), "The first technical foul was called for, Mr. B'more was only going to block a shot by [Mark] Caguioa. It was a legitimate move to block a shot and there was no intent to hurt."

On the second technical foul, Guiao said, "We showed the tape and it showed that Oliver just extended his feet on the side of Caguioa. Again, there was no malicious intent to hurt."

Playing without Oliver is Ginebra's Sam Mitchell, that Ball lost to Ginebra by my view, last Wednesday's outcome was good enough. But, a player, import or local, is merely disobeying a legal, not to mention the ball that Ball the game became less exciting and the result more predictable.

Rosemary Eala said that based on existing PBA rules, the ejection merits an automatic one-game suspension. "I don't see a compelling reason to change the rules."

According to basketball debaters, the decision to impose a one-game suspension on Jimmy was grossly unfair and too harsh. They stressed that Jimmy did not even deliver a single blow at anybody, not a single player from Ginebra had suffered. Ginebra's star Jeric Teng, and there was not even a strike. If some people got pissed off about that, then they have a problem. "They need to look to the mirror" they said.

As a longtime PBA fan, I can say that among the imports who have strutted their stuff here, Jimmy and Shawn Daniels (of the LE are the most behaved, hard-working and level-headed players compared with others who played on the PBA in the past. They are a breed apart from those rude, arrogant and ill-mannered imports who played here for the big money and enjoyed the hospitality of the Filipinos. The PBA is lucky to have the likes of Jimmy displaying his playing skills here.

Now on to 2006, you, the PBA fan had its ups and downs seasons. Over the country's most popular and profitable sports organizations, it fell on hard times in 2005 and 2006. Gone are the good old days when the much respected Leo Prieto, brilliant lawyer Rudy Salud and my colleague, Jun Bernardino, steered the pro league to unprecedented success.

I am not saying that Eala has been ineffective as the PBA commissioner since he replaced Bernardino in 2003, but he needs to prove himself by showing to the public the team owners and the players as well that he is his resolute that there is equal treatment and no discrimination in the PBA, especially now that the season are playing with much intensity because the results carry much weight.

In fact, the competition among the team owners—the name are already busy preparing for the next conference by trading and getting new players. TNT reportedly is having go-it to trade players, including Willie Miller, but not Air Jackson and Jimmy Alapag, while Talk is actively looking to acquire Red Bull's Lordy Tugade in exchange for Rich Alvarez, a former Ateneo teammate and former buddy of Bombo marquee player Eric Menseses.

Tiger back on the prowl in Dubai

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—Tiger Woods put his clubs away, forgot about golf at last he could and concentrated on his vacation.

He's ready to get back to work.

Woods won the Buick Invitational in a playoff Sunday in San Diego, his first tournament of the season after a six-week break...the longest of his career. Now, after a 10-hour flight to the Persian Gulf, he'll make a third attempt at winning the Dubai Desert Classic, which begins play Thursday.

He reportedly is being paid about $5 million to play in one of the Palestinian events of the PGA European Tour. The entire purse for the event is $2.4 million.

The Emirates Golf Course is a palm-lined oasis in the middle of Dubai, a booming city of 1.3 million. In 2001, Woods lost on the 72nd hole to Thomas Bjorn. In 2004, he finished five strokes behind winner and Florida neighbor Mark O'Meara.

During his break, Woods says he's been spending time with his wife, Elin, and some skiing with O'Meara and his family. AP

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Face to face with Jennifer Aniston

'It has been a tough year but I wouldn't change a thing'

By Jane Susan R. Nepales
Correspondent

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

LOS ANGELES—JENNIFER ANISTON is one tough cookie.

The first time we met her a few years ago, Jen was still married to Brad Pitt and very much in love. She came across as a demure newcomer, an innocent girl you could hang out with for a book with. She wasn't feeling well at the time (she was nursing a flu) but she exuded warmth, sincerity and a thoroughly wholesome personality.

Today, Jennifer, 36, is in the clink of a messy divorce that involves her soon ex-hubby Brad and a pregnant Angelina Jolie. After several months of keeping their relationship low key, Brad, 42, and Angelina, 30, finally announced they were expecting their first child. The whole world was shocked—Jen included. Especially Jennifer.

Jen was reportedly alone in her Hollywood house when news that the Hollywood babe was due in May broke. For those who are dying to know, Angelina was pregnant before the divorce of Brad and Jen was finalized last October. In a family like ours every Jennifer admitted that she wanted to start her own family going as far as to declare, "There's a man wandering the streets right now who's going to feel the fucker of my children."

Could it be her new beau, actor Vince Vaughn, from whom she says she is getting moral support?

Ironically, Aniston just did a movie, "Derailed," where the premise "the other woman" is it.

This time around, we met Jennifer at The Ritz Carlton Washington Hotel and Spa. She arrived in a striking blond pixie-cut peroxide, blonde hair cascading down her shoulders. She was calm, cool, relaxed and smiling—this was our fourth before the announcement of the Evangelina baby.

In "Derailed," the lead characters are cheating on their spouses. How important is fidelity to a marriage? Or should it be accepted as just being "involved" in flairs on open marriage?

Well (laughter)... I am not personally up for swinging but I think, you know, to each his own. There are people who have open marriages and they think that is what I personally assume movement in that. I think fidelity is to me, portant in a marriage.

Are there other things just as important?

Trust, honesty and friendship.

You have a line in the movie that goes, "You can't appreciate someone until they are gone." We there people in your life you did not appreciate?

Sure, I would say that as a kid, you do not always appreciate maybe your elders all the time, like your grandmother. I'd spend more time with my grandmother when I was a kid... and it wasn't that I didn't appreciate her, I was just... a kid. But I loved her. She was one of the strongest women I have ever known. Like, we had a fun relationship when we were together but I did not make that an effort, you know.

What made you accept this role?

I was hesitant at first but I always wanted

MORE ON P.

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5 WALK THE LINE
6 PROOF
7 RUMOR HAS IT
8 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
9 UNDERWORLD 2
10 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

ERMITA

1 BLOODRAYNE
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 ZATHURA
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
4 WALK THE LINE
6 PROOF
7 SAW 2
8 DERAILED

METRO EAST

1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
2 DERAILED
3 ZATHURA
4 UNDERWORLD 2
5 BLOODRAYNE
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 SAW 2
8 PROOF

NOVALICHES

1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
2 ZATHURA
3 HALF LIGHT
4 UNDERWORLD 2
5 SAW 2
6 DERAILED

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1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 JUTOX
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Cinema 6: DERAILED

STA. ROSA

1 DERAILED
2 THE MAID
3 LITTLE MANHATTAN
4 MOURNING GIRLS
5 ZATHURA

LIPA

1 ZATHURA
2 MOURNING GIRLS
3 SAINT ANGE
4 RUMOR HAS IT
5 DERAILED

DASMARINAS

1 DERAILED
2 ZATHURA
3 LITTLE MANHATTAN
4 RUMOR HAS IT
5 THE MAID

ANGELES

1 JAUHEAD
2 HUTOS
3 RUMOR HAS IT
4 DERAILED

IMUS

1 HALF LIGHT
2 ZATHURA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 DERAILED
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
6 SAW 2

STARMILLS

1 HALF LIGHT
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ZATHURA
4 RUMOR HAS IT
5 THE MAID
6 DERAILED

BACOLOD

1 DERAILED
2 ZATHURA
3 JAWHEAD
4 LITTLE MANHATTAN
5 MOURNING GIRLS
6 WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

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The Perfect Gift All Year Round

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Face to face . . .

From page A2-1

to do a thriller. I love a good thriller.

Did you like your character?

I like [the fact] that she was flawed. I think she was trapped in a situation that she really could not get out of.

Why do you think somebody like Clive's character would be attracted to your character and leave a beautiful wife?

I don't know. I think that's just life. I think that is what is sort of harsh about it. Life is not easy. Life does not make sense sometimes. You can have everything wonderful in the world and you just make stupid choices, you know, because you are bored for a moment or you are not fulfilled for a moment.

Your character obviously has a very dark side—did you see that?

Not really. I mean, I do not look at it as a dark side. Or, I do not think she looks at herself as a dark person, you know. It's like... a villain does not think he is villainous.

Lastly, you have been on the scene of most magazines. How has the past year been to you?

It has been the best of times and the worst of times. It has been a tough year but I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

How do you feel that everyone thinks of you as his or her best friend?

It is nice that everyone thinks that they know me even if they do not. People have been very supportive. I think that is very nice.

Do you always date just actors?

No, it can be anybody as long as he is not crazy. He does not have to be famous. I would go out with a normal guy.

How do you relax?

I do yoga, tea or three times a week. It keeps my body strong and makes me feel, eat and function better. I try to relax also by being with my friends. I am very easy going. I like to be in my home. I like to watch movies or just get in the car and go on a road trip.

Any regrets from the past year?

I did not have to do anything I did not want to do this past year. It was all good. I did not have to put on an act. My friends make me laugh. I make myself laugh. I have a very small group of friends and I usually speak to three or four for advice. I collect the dust and dust figure out what to do.

How do you make decisions?

I follow my heart. I follow my instincts. Every time I strayed from my instincts, I went down a bad road.

What makes you happy?

A movie makes me happy, a bottle of wine and nice cheese. And, of course, love makes me happy. Simple things make me happy.

What are your hopes for 2006?

To be happy. To follow my heart, to follow my instincts. To continue to figure things out, find a place, have great friends and have a family of my own.

Do you still believe in marriage?

Sure, why not.

JDN with Clive Owen in "Derailed"

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DID YOU KNOW...

6 more for PBB

An unsigned text message gave three winner of more "very likely" housemates in the Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity ... ...ries which starts 8pm/7c on ABS-CBN (apart from six mentioned in Intl-Journal yesterday): Tuesday Prince Valdez, Rainier Sarcelo, Mark Reynolds, JDBrock Gil Ray Bolder, IRA Gomez Mohalet Gretchen Mohalet and model Casper Morales.

Rivers for Gems

Richard Gomez surprised his wife Lucy and her cinema sisters in Claro Rivera's "Kadalasan" cine Dolly during [illegible] at the Fundacion Cuenca Hacienda in Makati. In turning up ... some[illegible] for a forthcoming dance concert. The reunion number became a fiery celebration, thanks to the actor's presence and the ex... element it apparently ... [illegible] among the ladies. The concert is on Feb. 25 at the SGBC Auditorium.

OPENS FEBRUARY 8!

PG-13

HARRISON FORD
PAUL BETTANY
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THEY'RE ALREADY INSIDE.

Choose Your Valentine Show

How to Get the Guy!

Hosts: Rachel Alejandro, Geneva Cruz and Vina Morales

Guests: Kris Lawrence and Derek Ramsay (Feb. 10); Luis Manzo (Feb. 11); Jay-R (Feb. 12)

Choreographer: Gerry-el
Musical director: Mark Lopez
Stage director: Flip Quintos
Dates: Feb. 10, 11, 12
Venue: Music Museum

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

Rachel: I have never experienced not having someone on Valentine's Day. This year will be the first time; it'll be something new.

Geneva: My mom, DJ, Ahmerol, takes me out to dinner.

Vina: If I'm not seeing anyone, I spend it with friends. If I have a special someone, then I spend it with him.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you ever experienced?

Rachel: After a concert at the Shangri-La Hotel, I went back to my room and found rose petals all over the floor—my boyfriend's doing. He had also gotten me a cute stuffed toy and ordered room service.

Geneva: When JC got us a hotel suite and filled it with flowers and candles.

Vina: I haven't really experienced one. Hopefully soon.

What's your dream Valentine's date?

Rachel: A picnic on the beach at sunset, having wine and cheese.

Geneva: Candlelit dinner on the beach with Italian food. A bottle of Pinot or Merlot would be nice.

Vina: On the beach, candlelit dinner, sunset, romantic music.

Who is your fantasy date?

Rachel and Vina: Brad Pitt!

Geneva: Brad Pitt and Chad Michael Murray!

What's the most romantic love song?

Rachel: "It Might Be You."

Geneva: "Hush, Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte" by Brian McKnight.

Vina: "Nobody Does It Better" and "Love Me for What I Am."

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch this year?

Rachel: Brian McKnight or Maxwell.

Geneva: Ditto!

Vina: Secret Habahar!

Why should we watch your show? What can the audience expect?

Rachel: It's not your typical Valentine's show. Since there'll be a lot of dancing, it'll be a high-energy show. It'll also be funny and informative for girls and guys alike.

Geneva: We [three] are great friends. We have a certain chemistry that other performers may not have. We have so much fun together—that's what the audience will see.

Vina: Lots of dancing and singing, plus it's our first time to perform together.

Beyond Sun (Regie A.

CLOCKWISE, from top: Vina, Geneva and Rachel

Show Time

Tomorrow

The Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines invites everyone to "Buddy-buddy on February 4xxxx-happy to ESAP," a celebration of the National Down Syndrome Consciousness Month, at the Rizal City Sports Complex, 24 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Celebrity guests include Aga Muhlach and Edu Manzano. A mini-concert will feature Sweetheart, Sampaguita and Basseman Revival.

Call 895-3606 or 895-9662.

Andy Williams

Andy Williams, one of the most popular crooners of all time—"Where Do I Begin," "Moon River," "Days of Wine and Roses" among hundreds of other hits...will serenade his Philippine fans during a 30-minute concert on Feb. 14 at Araneta Coliseum.

"Andy Williams Live! One Romantic Evening" is a one-night only event. Call 915-5555.

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DERAILED	WALK THE LINE	PROOF
SAW 2	BLOODRAYNE	UNDERWORLD 2
DERAILED	UNDERWORLD 2	DERAILED / WALK THE LINE
DERAILED	LITTLE MANHATTAN	CHARLIE & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

MALL CINEMAS

1	SAW 2	2	DERAILED	3	UNDERWORLD 2
4	DON'T GIVE UP ON US	5	BLOODRAYNE		

EVENTS & PROMOS

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SAW 2
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R-13

WALK THE LINE
2 11:00, 2:00, 5:00, 8:00, 11:00
PG-13

DERAILED
3 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 9:00, 11:30
R-13

PROOF
4 12:45, 3:00, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
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They rock, we roll

By Oliver N. Palumbarit
Contributor

"Walk the Line" is a complicated fairy tale that makes us tap our feet and smile

REVIEW

JOAQUIN PHOENIX AND REESE Witherspoon deliver distinguished portrayals of beloved music legends Johnny Cash and June Carter-Cash in "Walk the Line." Phoenix stars as Cash, while Witherspoon sparkles as the painfully loyal Carter. Their rapport brings to life a romance once forbidden, since the pioneering musicians already had their own respective families when they first met.

Phoenix and Witherspoon's milestone roles also required them to sing using their own voices—up-on director James Mangold and Cash's insistence.

"Walk the Line" skillfully discusses Cash's childhood trauma and eventual self-destruction, from his drug addiction, and his crafty, off-cuttlest relationship.

It also depicts the musician's unpretentious pursuit to pop cultural revolution—Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis are among his peers...and how different the musical landscape was back in 1950s America.

It's easy to understand how these two future icons set out to conquer their brave new world. But sadly in Cash's case, that world repeatedly conquered him. In this complicated fairy tale, however, the renewed denied once the fallen, broken and still-skilled knight. One really can't help but be touched.

Joaquin Cash's own unwittingly, plays "Walk the Line" underscores the very human side of superstardom, and the ever-volatile tension is unflagging of humble beginnings. There is a timelessness to it that today's entertainment scene desperately might relate to, and even learn from. We also feel a crucial honesty in the narrative through Cash's pervading lyrics and ostensibly appealing music, which grabs, and still speaks, to diverse listeners.

The songs help tell stories within the bigger story, as well. In gripping song numbers, the actors channel the performing personas of those they portray, manifesting astounding liberation and humanity that make us smile, tap our feet, or choke up. Simply put: They rock, and... well, we roll.

LEAD actors Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon

RIB-TICKLING FUN BEGINS FEB 8!

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SHANG CINEPLEX

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3 DERAILED
4 WALK THE LINE
5 SAW 2
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PROMENADE
1 BLOOD RAPHE
2 CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY
3 DERAILED
4 PROOF
5 WALK THE LINE

NOW SHOWING

3RD WEEK
THE FIRST BIG MOVIE FOR 2006

Hollywood, Bollywood, Jollywood

RP film products find overseas markets

By Marinel R. Cruz

ACTORS RICHARD GUTIERREZ and Angel Locsin will be appearing in Italian bishounen (where the Philippines is) Jay Jurisprudence "Mulawin" from GMA 7 premiere on as bishounen channel in March, according to a GMA Network executive.

"Mulawin," the TV series that launched the love team of Richard [Agudo] and Angel [Alcasid] in 2000, would also be dubbed in Italian, the international language, and aired on TV 7 as Ms. Inez Viscal Suzanne Del Rosario, and Andrew Gonzales, assistant vice president for syndication.

"This is a breakthrough. We've wanted to penetrate the Jurisprudence market for two years now," Gonzales told Inquirer Entertainment in a phone interview on Tuesday. "The programs was edited to fit 50-episodes, one hour each. No time slot has been picked."

GMA 7's executive vice president and chief operating officer Gilberto Duavit and TV 7 president Lamar Rosenfeld sealed the deal in June 2005, about the same time GMA 7 and Cambodia Channel 9 — Kamboda Television Network] linked up for the same TV show, Jurisprudence noted.

"The programs was dubbed in Khmer and aired in Cambodia last September," she said. "We're working on translating other programs like 'Encantadia,' but nothing has been finalized so far."

Meanwhile, Vice Mayor, who represented presidential consultant for entertainment Vic del Rosario on a trade mission to India last month said he is hopeful that the top

CHEER FACTOR

RISHAN S.S.

Director

Kishan, 10

MUMBAI — WHILE children his age go gaga over Harry Potter films, a 10-year-old Indian boy sails the skies from behind the camera.

Rishan S.S., who has acted in several regional-language films, is media-shy. Only alcohol with a fourteen film on street children, actual that revolutionalist film star of the youngest professional filmmakers in the world.

"I'm study with 65 percent of the film and looking at an April release," Rishan said from his home in the south Indian city of Bangalore.

Rishan isn't chasing awards. "I was out six inches with my father one day when I saw three street children. I was sad that they were just like us," he says. "They did not go to school or study. I decided to do something for them."

"[A] [case of] Pandora" is the story of a street urchin who goes to go to school and makes it big. It is meant to be an inspiration for millions of street children, says Rishan.

The $170,000, 135-minute film is being produced by Rishan's mother, Shailaja, a movie music director. Rishan's [illegible] said that we are serious in our international reach with India."

Internet President Hilel E. Ramos led a 23-member mass that visited the cultural center from Jan. 15 to 21 to attend "Masterclass Summit 2006" in Colombo.

Del Rosario is also the executive producer of Uni-Entertainment Inc. Manny is Del Rosario's chief of staff and head of Uni-Entertainment's film archiving department.

In an earlier interview, Del Rosario pointed out that there is a big Indian market for Pinoy films and TV shows.

"We may be able to generate demand for Filipino films there if we promote them properly. We are targeting the Bhardati market, which is used to watching foreign movies," said Moreno. "We are also looking into the possibility of co-producing Indian films there and/or Filipino movies here."

Bhardati, Moreno added, is the center of Bollywood, the world's largest film industry, which produces more the annual film input of Hollywood in the United States.

Moreno added: "The companies we spoke with asked us to send newscasts (films recorded in VCDs and DVDs). They seem to feel as if they are market for our productions."

As for Cabrera summit, Moreno said Iranian "franchised Pinoy films as Jollywood."

"With our movies introduced as Jollywood, we are hoping to have our own branding, our own identity. When we hear Jollywood, you'll know it's from the Philippines," he explained.

Moreno clarified: "While acknowledging that Jollywood is part of the same lineage with Bollywood and Hollywood in terms of output, it aspires to be within the top 10 films in the world. Known exceptional quality, not quantity in films."

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'Show me the monkey!'

Backstage at the Screen Actors Guild Awards—or close encounters with Matt Dillon, Sandra Bullock, Paul Giamatti, Felicity Huffman ...

Photos by Janet Susan R. Hegales

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

By Ruben V. Nepales

LOS ANGELES—"SHOW ME the monkey! Show me the monkey!"

Where we heard the photographers screaming this to the winners backstage at last Sunday evening's Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards, we wondered if they were asking a particular actor or actress to expose a body part.

It turned out that the photographers simply wanted Reese Witherspoon or Kinder Sutherland to prominently show off their genie-black SAG trophies.

Occasionally happens in these events (SAG night was the latest) even in Hollywood's ongoing search awards, the photographers and reporters were split into two groups. After thanking their diverse lawyers (S. Epatha Merkerson did) and agents (most actors did), winners were whisked first to the paparazzi room and then to the reporters' room.

We knew when a big star was being photographed near room because the paparazzi, never known for being shy, shouted at the top of their lungs to catch the winner's attention, make him or her stop and pose. The sound of this pandemonium reminded us of a boxing match.

In the press room, a different kind of exuberance ensued. Hilarious reporters from all branches of media—print, radio, TV, online—are thrown together, expert load to the photographers, "Shhh! do that!" and made marching gestures. Everybody cracked up. When Martha Stewart entered and saw what he was doing, he immediately stopped her in a conversation.

Even 77-year-old Shirley Temple Black, the night's Lifetime Achievement awardee, announced, "The handsomest guy in the room is George Clooney. I haven't talked to him yet. I will later."

George may have lost to Paul Giamatti in Best Supporting Actor but the latter said of the "Syriana" actor "He's good-looking and a good actor." Paul himself is one of the finest actors today but appearance-wise, he was channeled-ball-headed rather uncoolly—no tie, unused bottom eyes, a low pair-plays-on his face.

Typically, the self-effacing actor did not take too seriously a reporter's question on how he planned his career path. "Was I on a path?" he deadpanned. "I thought I was just lost in the woods."

About bling

Back in the red carpet, an interesting sight was a gaggle of three divorce, who, having dropped off their famous paramours, were trying to spot the celebrities through the media throng and a brass. "Is that Brad Pitt?" they asked aloud, reminding a grey-haired blackout as the red carpet media line for the 12th Screen Actors Guild. The question showed that these headliners spend a lot of time on the road listening to "loud" noise on the latest trends, and not currently registering in front of the TV watching the E! channel.

While all this was going on, a colleague of mine who was going live on Samsung TV had curiously forced about the $60,000 diamond earrings she was wearing. Time to let be changed. "Glad as if I need a body-guard," she quipped as she tugged at her jewelry to make sure they were still there.

Speaking of bling, Herkerver, Best Actress in a TV Movie or Miniseries (for HBO's "Lackawanna Blues"), was also the winner in the Most Blinding Bling Department. The actress was dressed down in a black blouse and pants but her ring, bracelet, necklace and earrings were sparkled. The duvets from her diamond-studded ring alone almost made us wash for our sunglasses.

It was déjà vu for us when Dramatic Monaghan walked into the press room with his "Lost" cast mates. The other year, Jeremy appeared on the same spot as part of the winning "Lord of the Rings" ensemble. So we asked Dramatic what it was like being a winner this time around. "It's just work," he answered. "You go from one project to another. It's great to just be working. Nothing is more significant than another. They are stepping stones."

Desirable's co-star, Michelle Rodriguez, made the press laugh when she answered a reporter's question with, "I'm wearing [Issac Mizrahi] Payless. Did I say that right? She's here in the business since the '80s, and I'm an old people."

Other memorable backstage moments:

Terrence Hayes showed why he deserved to win Best Actor in a TV Comedy Series ("Will & Grace"). As he was being introduced to the press, Tom pretended to be a hyperkinetic all over again. He scanned his fingers to touch surfaces and when he heard his name, he reacted jubilantly and rushed to the mike.

Instant rapport

Also an exuberant winner was Mehcad Brooks, a member of the "Desperate Housewives" cast which was adjudged Best Ensemble (TV Comedy Series). Mehcad revealed that only four years ago, he was enrolled at the nearby University of Southern California and an avid fan of the fans in the bleachers stand. With that admission, he jumped down to be with his press audience and pulled into a solo bid for a reporter.

Mehcad's co-star, Felicity Huffman, then starred in a TV Comedy Series, also had a way of creating instant rapport with the cropped up journalists. Entering the room, her first words were, "You need a drink, right? Who can't we serve you Beer?"

When we interviewed her less than a year ago, Felicity told a fellow reporter in our group that the mishaps she went that day was something she just bought at Sears. But this evening, Felicity was quite a vision in her violet gown and 14-karat gold chandelier earrings. "I'm [sore] a fashionista!" she quipped, her tone tripping with irony.

Felicity insisted that her recent successes had not changed her. "It happened to me so late," said the most down-to-earth among the shapeshifts. "Do each second I stand. We get to drag across of gratitude in your bones."

As the rites ended, Matt Dillon suddenly found his scenario (which he received as a member of the "Crash" ensemble) into our hands. The thing sure felt heavy—12 pounds of solid bronze. So wonder the program Rachel Weisz had to put her Best Supporting Actress trophy down before she answered the reporters' questions.

Viewer — Dream," we volunteered to Matt, predicting that he would also be nominated by the academy for Best Supporting Actor, following his nominations in the same category tonight and at the Globes (also for "Crash"). He simply smiled.

Matt remembered that we ruined seeing his new movie in Sundance so he asked us, "Have you seen 'Backroom'?" The man was already campaigning for awards season 2007.

Two days later, Matt did score an three nominations.

(E-mail the columnist at newsdesk_9500@yahoo.com.)

GEORGE Clooney

L-SPATHE Merkerson

SANDRA Bullock: What was the question?

PAUL Giamatti

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Golocngwei, the 2nd time around B2 | Customs exceeds January collection goal B6

BUSINESS

E-mail us at business@inquirer.com.ph
Website: www.inq7.net/money
Gina Reil O. Mariano
Assistant Editor Connie S. Mariano

P10-B SLEX upgrade finally set to roll out

Project underway as TRB issues vital document

By Nonoy W. Domingo

THE P10-BILLION SOUTH LUZON EXPRESSWAY UPGRADE is finally set to roll out now that the Tollways Regulatory Board has issued the final document that will allow proponent South Luzon Tollways Corp. (SLTC) to push through with the project, according to Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila.

Favila said in an interview that the supplemental tollway operation agreement (Stoa) was signed last Wednesday which would allow the SLTC to follow up its initial preparations undertaken in 2004.

SLTC is an 88 percent-28 percent joint venture between the Malaysian-controlled Ropewell Group International Inc. and the Philippine National Construction Corp.

The National Development Co., the government's investment arm, will hold a part of the project to secure the right of way.

Favila said that, like the implementation of the rationalized value-added tax, the improvement of a vital road that links Metro Manila's airports with the industrial enclaves south of the capital is key to enabling the government's growth targets.

SLTC general manager Arthur G. Aguilar

P-1 to SLEX B2

MYTH #1
AREN'T ALL CARS AS SAFE AS A VOLVO THESE DAYS?

Sadly, no. Although — strange as it might sound — we've tried to make sure they are. For example, when Volvo invented the three point seat belt in 1959 we decided not to patent it so all manufacturers could use it — and save even more lives. (we did the same thing when we invented the catalytic converter in 1976, incidentally. No patent.)

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The same commitment drives our investment in our multi-million pound Safety Centre in Gothenburg, which has investigated over 50,000 real life accidents involving Volvo cars and used their findings to make our cars even safer.

And because we believe computer simulations tell only half the story, we also conduct over 200 full-scale collisions each year, based on what researchers discover on the roads.

We then use this information to create unique safety enhancements, from increasing the size of our crumple zones to help protect pedestrians to WHIPS — a Whiplash Protection System — proven to reduce the risk of long-term whiplash injury.

MYTH #2
A VOLVO'S NATURAL HABITAT IS THE SLOW LANE

Or at the very most, the middle lane. But put your foot down in a Volvo these days and you'll find that myth disappears as fast as the cars in your rear-view mirror.

After all, Volvo was winning British Touring Car Championships when the competition was still sitting on their dads' shoulders in the stands. And we've carried that love of flat-out thrills into our production cars.

Take the Volvo S60 T5, for example. Available for test drives at Volvo dealerships—but in 2002, the very same car broke 18 land-speed records in 24 hours at Millbrook (including racking up an average speed of 135.1mph). Which makes it the only production car to hold such a record. It packs a mighty 260bhp under the bonnet and 350Nm of torque, yet balanced by an array of performance-enhancing technology designed to keep your car on the road and smile on your face. Slow? Sluggish? Sorry, we've got to put our foot down on that one.

MYTH #3
OK, BUT AREN'T VOLVO FANS IN THE MINORITY?

Ah, you'd be surprised. In the past few years, it's been Volvo that's been getting the motoring press hot under the collar, not the marques you'd expect. In the words of an international motoring correspondent, 'these day Volvos are cool cars to be seen in'.

Even certain, more notoriously hard to please motoring journalists have been bowled over – 'it must be the sheer brutality of the thing that made it head and shoulders above our favourites. Influenced by the strong kick in the solar plexus, we truly felt that if power and excitement is what you want, this is what you need.'

So if you've ever felt inexplicable feelings of attraction towards a Volvo, take heart. You're not alone. Now why not see where those longings take you?

MYTH #4
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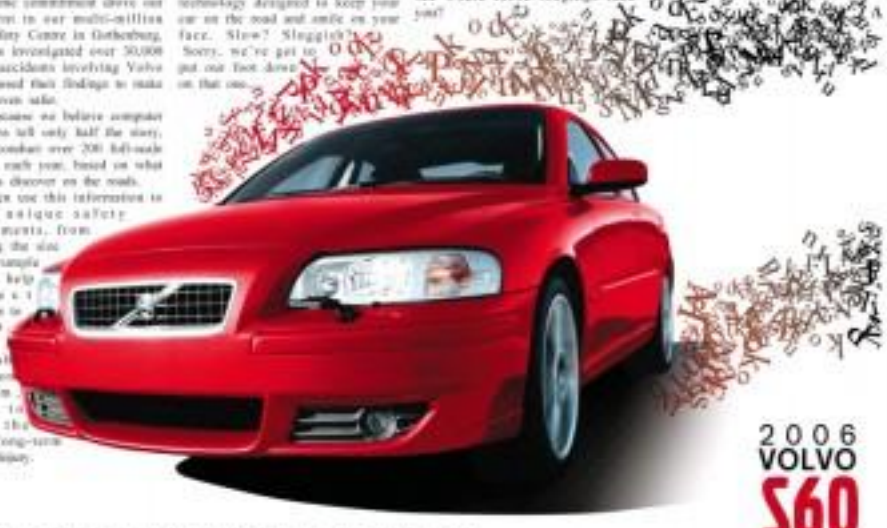
But don't take our word for it. The best way to really see how far we've come is to get behind the wheel yourself. So if you like what you read so far – the best is yet to come.



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BTr nets ₱35B from investments

Income up 52 percent from ₱22.94 billion recorded in 2004

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU OF THE TREASURY (BTr) earned P35 billion from investing part of the national government's bond sinking fund in foreign securities.

The national government contributes to the fund to ensure payment of maturing obligations, such as long-term sovereign bonds.

The fund is mainly invested in dollar-denominated paper issued by foreign governments.

Government data showed that the P34.813-billion income that the Treasury earned from BSF investments in 2005 was 52 percent more than the P22.94 billion it collected the previous year.

"Investments of the bond sinking fund was one of the main sources of BTr income last year," National Treasurer Omar Cruz earlier said.

The Treasury collected P70.662 billion in investment fees last year, inclusive of the income from BSF investments.

The Treasury's total revenues for 2005 also almost doubled the official's target of only P36.4 billion, and 9 percent higher than the P64.85 billion collected the previous year.

Other revenue sources of the Treasury, which serve as a depository of the national government's income and a manager of its liabilities, were interest on deposits to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) and other banks, dividends on the government's shares of stock in some government banks, and fees and charges collected by government agencies and remitted to the Treasury.

The Treasury's performance made up for the collection shortfalls of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs, the government's two main revenue earners.

The BIR collected only P529.3 billion, or P12.4 billion short of its P541.8-billion target. The BOC, on the other hand, fell short of its 131.2-billion target by P9.3 billion.

But the government has been warned that depending on the Treasury, instead of the government's main revenue earners, to meet its fiscal targets was risky.

This year, the BIR is tasked with collecting P675.4 billion. The BOC is required to collect P188.5 billion, while the Treasury is expected to contribute a P61.9 billion.

Gokongwei, the 2nd time around

WE HAVE ANOTHER ABNORMAL INSTANCE that unique John Gokongwei Jr. has achieved more than its academic interest in the merger and acquisition potential of Equitable PCIBank.

The former PCIBank owner the other day called up another former bank director—this one here on good authority... to ask about the possibility of the Bangko Sentral allowing his sizable PCIBank to succeed the 30-percent "tenancy" block instead of selling it.

More importantly, Mr. John also asked his former board member the probable market valuation should the 16-percent block be auctioned along with the 6.66% stake in Equitable PCIBank.

As it turned out... the first Gokongwei query has already been answered, with no less than Deputy Governor for Supervision and Examination Nestor Espenilla Jr., another boy scout he's believed like the new governor, giving the go-ahead (as mentioned).

Earlier, Mr. John had envisioned to close an exclusive the possibility of joining an auction should the UBS, SSS and Santiagoldes shareholdings, already equivalent to about 46 percent, are offered as one block.

With 16 percent discount, in, translating to outlandish control, the smart money is on Mr. John—the lone keiper without a universal bank...finally crossing as, somehow, rule among rupees never to succumb on such offers but they, given that Equitable PCI Bank is more than the have domain of billion rupees, money by 'it', with the family's rumored 16-percent stake.

Incidentally, the Equitable PCIBank board will meet again today, with the discussions expected to be lengthy, deep and, given the kind of personal and professional fortunes at stake, passionate.

MVP on Tonyboy's style

PGFI chair Manuel V. Pangilinan gave the first public confirmation that his predecessor and former controlling shareholder Antonio Cojangco had different, even conflicting, management philosophies.

In his acceptance speech Tuesday night after being named Management Man of the Year, MVP recalled the early days when his First Pacific Group took control of the country's biggest telecom company from Cojangco.

"When I first reviewed the PLDT budget in December 1998 for the incoming year 1999, I was surprised that the first item for discussion was not sales or revenues, but capital expenditures for equipment," MVP said, supplying the enchantment point. "You can probably write the reason why."

Money-ga-raud

- FORMER SEC general accountant Roberto Manabat has been recommended by no less than SEC Chair Bi Buda to fill up the lone vacancy in the five-member commission.
- Competition among telecom companies is really getting tougher. Globe marketing men have been cold-calling the cell phones of select Smart subscribers, offering free Globe-1080 cards.

Heard through the grapevine

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission is considering relocating to a separate suite of government spaces in Quezon City near the Bureau of Internal Revenue, instead of The Port, the future site of the unified Philippine Stock Exchange and closer to the SEC's corporate base in Ayala.

(Email: mdeslas_pi@philstar.net or cocktail_pi@yahoo.com)

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Victor C. Agustin

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Shares close ...

Previous B1

owner sentiment, dealers said.

The composite index rose 15.86 points to 2,139.37 after reaching a low of 2,140.51. Volume stood at 2.32 billion shares worth ₱1.39 billion ($25.7 million).

Gainers outnumbered losers 49 to 33, while 48 stocks ended unchanged. The all-shares index rose 11.44 points to 1,643.95.

The peso averaged at 52.07 to the US greenback at midday Guido.

Top traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone stocks (p/52) at a record high of ₱1,800 after its chairman Manuel Pangilinan said the firm's 2006 net profit likely to exceed its ₱36 billion target. AFP

Peso settles at 52.09 to US dollar

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY CAME close to breaching the 52.01 level, but didn't quite make it.

The peso yesterday hit a high of 52.03 and a low of 52.19 before firming up at the session high of 52.09 in the 10 a.m. close on Wednesday's clinch.

"There was good two-way buying" said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. "Dollar demand from manufacturing, oil and others was covered by inflow from overseas Filipino workers remittances and portfolio investments."

Overall investor sentiment on the Philippines remained positive, the BSP chief added.

"There's still an upside for the peso. The market will continue to test the 52.01 level and 51.88 after that," said Jonathon Perelen, chief strategist at Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

Barreiro said overseas equity deals in the pipeline—such as the public offering of First Generation Holdings Corp. and the bank investments committed by Japan's 8/17 InCoMo to Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.—would further perk up the local currency.

P10-B SLEX . . .

From page B1

said the signing of the STOA would expedite groundwork on the SLEX.

The SLEX project involves the repair of the Alabang viaduct, widening of the stretch from Alabang to Calamba in Laguna, and extending the road to Sto. Tomas in Batangas.

About 60 percent of the traffic of goods in Luzon pass through this vital artery.

Ignacio said the SOE paid its private partner, led by Malaysia's MTD Capital Bhd, had already started construction and legal preparations, even when the STOA was still pending with the TRB.

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Bond Fund - Peso	1.3082	1.3088
Managed Fund - Peso	1.4249	1.4289
Growth Fund - Peso	1.5911	1.5957
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.2240	1.2251

Investment Funds of	UNIT PRICES (in Php)	
	Jan. 30, 2006	Jan. 23, 2006
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Balanced Fund	1.410871	1.410716
Equity Fund	3.086226	3.089219

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BUSINESS

Customs exceeds January collection goal

Fighting target for this year set at ₱200B

By Michelle V. Ratha and Lolita B. Saisenreta

BEHIND HIGH & DRY: Customs chief Lito Banayo (left) and Bureau of Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales (right) inspect the confiscated vessel MV Sea Princess, which was seized in Subic Bay Freeport Zone in 2004 for violating customs laws. The vessel is now being auctioned off by the BOC. (Photo by Jay Morales)

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS started 2006 on a positive note by surpassing its collection target for January.

Newly appointed Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said the BOC collected ₱12.373 billion in January, or 2.4 percent higher than the target for the month of ₱12.081 billion.

"The January collection was also 17.1 percent higher than the ₱10.567 billion passed in the same month last year.

"It broke the January jinx of the BOC," Morales said. January is customs's least productive month and a difficult time to single up revenue because it comes after the Christmas season.

"We are tightening the monitoring of valuation to address the problem of technical smuggling," Morales said.

He said undervaluation of imports was among the biggest sources of revenue leakages.

The reported January collection came in the form of cash and did not take into account the BOC's non-cash duty collections.

The Department of Finance, in a brief survey, is studying the possibility of including non-cash duty and tax collection to be included in the revenue collection performance of the BOC and the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

The plan is in line with the proposed shift to accrual accounting system, as practiced in other countries, from the current cash accounting system. The plan, however, has elicited criticisms because it would blot revenue collection without actually giving the guarantee that the government will receive the money.

Morales said she puts it that she exceeded their respective collection targets included those of Batangas, Manila, Cotabato, Surigao, Tacloban, Legaspi and San Fernando.

Morales, who was appointed customs chief last December replacing Alexander Arevalo, said the BOC would set an internal collection target of ₱200 billion this year, or higher than the original target of ₱198.1 billion.

The ₱198.5-billion target is 10 percent higher than the BOC's target in 2005 of ₱179.1.2 billion, which the bureau surpassed by ₱1.4 billion.

Last 2004, the BOC turned in only ₱141.7 billion in revenue collection.

The BOC's weak performance last year came on the heels of leadership changes in the agency, starting with the replacement of former Customs chief George Jereos by Alberto Lina. Lina was eventually replaced by Arevalo, who later went back to his old post (deputy commissioner) when Morales was appointed customs chief.

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Benguet Corp. seeks FTAA for Kingking project

By Christine A. Gapuz

BENGUET Corp. HAS APPLIED FOR THE conversion of the tenement status of the copper porphyry portion of its Kingking property in Eastern Mindanao from a mineral production-sharing agreement (MPSA) into a foreign technical assistance agreement (FTAA).

The application was submitted to the Bureau of Mines and Geosciences, an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, for approval.

An FTAA allows up to 100 percent foreign ownership in a mining project while MPSA allows only local companies to own a mining resource and to enjoy incentives provided by the government.

In the proposal submitted to DENR, Benguet said the conversion of its MPSA into FTAA was the best approach to encourage investors to develop the copper porphyry portion of Kingking. The other portion of the Kingking property, which is a prospective source of gold, will remain under the MPSA.

In another development, Benguet is holding exploratory talks with a South Korean company for the development of its coal prospect in Surigao del Sur.

Benguet has several new mineral prospects in Luzon and in Mindanao.

Known as the biggest gold mining company in the Philippines and the sixteenth largest in the world, Benguet Corp. has mining concessions operator in Masbate, Zambales, known internationally as "Masbate Ore," and a copper-gold operations in San Marcelino, Zambales.

Aside from the existing deepen Gold project in Benguet that it now shares with small scale miners, the company is looking at the Kingking Copper-Gold Prospect in Compostela Valley in Davao and the Bonanigan Gold prospect in Bataan, according to Benguet assistant vice president Edgar Tabanda.

PLDT considers selling stake in cable TV firm

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Co. may sell its interest in a cable television company now controlled by the Lopez group.

"I think it makes sense if we sell Home Cable. They (the Lopezes) are now running the show and we are not even involved in the day-to-day operations," said PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno in an interview.

PLDT's Philippine Home Cable Holdings was merged with the Lopez-owned cable companies in 2003, creating Beyond Cable Holdings, (operating under the brand SKYCable). Home Cable owns a third of Beyond Cable.

Nazareno said PLDT was still studying whether it would be better for the company to go into driven as home pay TV or offer TV services using Internet Protocol or IPTV.

Both options, according to Nazareno, are being considered. "We have to anticipate the wave of the future," he said.

PLDT wanted to have best interest in the cable TV business since last year. It earlier offered to swap its interest in Home Cable for control of Lopez's phone company, Bayan Telecommunications Inc.

Also last year, PLDT negotiated with former PLDT owner Antonio Cojuangco for the telco's bid to acquire Philippine Multi-Media Systems Inc., operator of Dream Satellite TV.

Both cable companies Benguet is exchange for Home Cable and to buy Dream Satellite TV—failed in the fourth quarter. Sources said the price tags for both companies were too high.

Nazareno said Cojuangco's group, given the synergies between Dream Satellite TV and SkyCable, might be interested to buy PLDT's stake in Home Cable. The Lopez group could also opt to buy PLDT's stake in the Lopez-owned cable TV company.

LIFESTYLE

Lito Chiki Brand Formoso

MONDAY STYLE ■ TUESDAY FITNESS ■ WEDNESDAY 2BU ■ THURSDAY FOOD ■ FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

FACE-HUGGING metal-temple visor glasses

METAL FRAME specialist

SUNGLASSES in acetate with logo engraved in contrasting colors on the temple length

Bold visions

THE Roberto Cavalli eyewear line, produced by Marcolin, cleverly interprets the moods of the Italian designer's fashion collections.

The collection, which features both sunglasses and prescription frames, is expected to fill Manila's stores soon. In fact, sunglasses are initially available at Rustan's Makati and Alabang.

The line offers close-fitting unisex styling shapes in bold colors and textures details: cross-over on the bridge, with appealing trim treatments, or temples enriched by applications in decoration, in designs suggesting the symbols of the snake.

Large and oversleeping masks are making a comeback. They have a double-bridge running either plain or running into the lens to form a heart right in the center of the frame in the metal versions. The acetate versions are in decidedly retro style, harking back to the '70s, all of them very large, in jewels or lacquer effect colorings.

The narrow models come in dark tones such as gloss black and dark brown. In some, the logo is positioned on the temple, on a horizontal plaque, or on the strap between front and temple.

The Roberto Cavalli eyewear line is exclusively distributed by The Optodata, Inc. in the Philippines.

LARGE and close-fitting Cavalli eyewear

GLAMOROUS combined sunglasses

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TALENTED boy Abrams

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HEY, I'M 40! The celebrator Carina Cruz with 40 cakes brought in by her 40 bestmen

LAS VEGAS high rollers Robert and Minda Fernandez with Karen Davila

SIMEON Comrade

HAND-TO-MOUTH singer Pinky Marquez

FAB Robert Sanz

Surprise birthday bash; hot golf tournament

CLOSEST to pals Ivonne Miller Reiz and Louie Cruz

Tiki Tajanlangit and Thomas Adams

VIVIAN Nebe and husband, international businessman Sam Cendoil

CTTO Bellevue

LOWEST Gross champion Lecio "Bong" Tan Jr.

HSBC'S SVP for operations Claire Ann Tiap, Visa International country manager James Dixon and Garan-based Samuel Lukang

P&L VP for marketing support Felix J. Cruz

PARLAYER? Miles Ellis-members Wilbert Tan, Johnny Sison, Jesus Johnston and Raymond Lazaro

OTHING ABOUT EXPERTS IS THAT they can do what they do best with their eyes shut, palangga. But in the case of the popular events management specialist, Thoughts and Notions, they did it with flair-lips sealed as well.

Brilliant Carina Cruz, owner of Thoughts and Notions, organized a simple birthday dinner for her friends and clientele at the poolside of the exclusive Punta Fuego Batangas.

It was a chill-out evening of caviar, salmon, fresh oysters and great fun. But when Carina's cake came, palangga, it can't be "just another event."

So Carina's friends all came to give her a rousing greeting: television's Karen Davila; Cito Beltran, host of "Tonight Talk"; women's rights activist Louie Cruz and his brother, Marc Cruz; Sandro Biela of Mr. Sandro Biela; event's favorite restaurateur in Batangas; Larry Lovidad; Rowena Cupero and Bhoy Trulos.

Hip hip hora, Lovy Jimenez Magazine, with Nancy Carvajal, joined the bash. By the way, Armand Cruz, Al Bacud, Fil and Rosario Wantonica, Boy Monjilo, Peggy Santos, Flaire Alejandro, Pia Hernandez, Serina Villanueva, Boy Republicano, Willie Mundi and Oscar Kindama, plus others like them, had a blast to the max.

Suddenly, Carina was pulled aside by one of her guests, who was having

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH
Maurice Arcache
Photos by Allen Mae Magpoc using Rodak CamPhone

when appeared in his client's spot with her boyfriend in the midst of the party. The celebrant took no time in rewarding her pal. Little did Carina know, that in the injured line party, 40 cakes as much for age, each cake with a candle, were brought to her in a surprise gift from Louie Cruz!

Carina was floored. Four of her close mates—singer Inay Alvarez, Robert Sella, Pinky Marquez and Bimbo Gonzales—belted out an amazing a cappella birthday song and got the happening on a roll until now, you-just the evening of the century.

That night was definitely a testimony to how an occasion, however ordinary can be made extraordinary by creative staging. The difference was that the tables were turned, making the usually-out Carina used.

Golf'er miles

Hey, all those golf lovers and members of the Mahogany Alden Elite and Premier Elite of Philippine Airlines' frequent flyer program, get together at the Riviera Golf Club for the annual Manhattan Miles Elite invitational golf "Kumustahan", palangga.

Young rajun Lucio "Bong" Tan Jr., hotshot executive vice president of Fortune Tobacco Corp., scored a cool three over par 74 at the tough Canyon course.

Another topper, Stewart Go, president of Philippine Seaboard Inc., carded a net 68, one great round of 75.

Needless to say, palangga, both gentlemen emerged as the day's big winners. There were a record 100 players during the awesome event, superbly sponsored by Airbus, GE Aircraft Engines, HSBC, Mercedes Gani Corp., Goldlogo.

Salesman "Sensor" Ilores actually finished dancer-awardee Simon Gumpert Go, but he had a lower handicap and had to settle for Class A honors with a net 69.

This tournament had for its corporate sponsors Add: International, Adidas Philippines, DHL Express and Subic Bay Marriottan.

The Class C crown was lorly contested at Vince Subos, Swedmund Bonanup and Edwin Ilores carded net 70s. But in the end, V. Subos brought home the bacon.

Senior Bernard Lallana's net 72 enabled him to top Class D, over Consolacion Valeria and Cinderella Manning Corp. vice president Richard Gaston, who both had net 73s.

Double Philippines, Bruno Sun, Sunsonite, Spring and Lumberwood were some of the event's major sponsors, with Century Park as official hotel of the tournament, palangga.

Hot lady Lilibeth de Mita dominated the ladies' division with a super impressive 72-net of a great 91, while Anne Antonio Lim ruled the gents' division with a net 68 (great).

Apart a totally great game, it was true to party. Fantastic entertainment was dished out by Asia Agassi, Gino Padilla, and Sherwe. The emcee, our palangga Archie Lacson, kept the members in complete attention.

On top of the major prizes, Philippine Airlines gave away Mabuhay Class tickets to Los Angeles, Honolulu, Sydney, Taipei and Hong Kong. Now if that ain't awesome, I don't know what is.

Singapore roadshow

The "Uniquely Singapore, Uniquely Rich and" event launched the Singapore Tourism Board Philippines (STB-P) series of her-destination roadshows.

The highlight was a dance extravaganza with the Singapore Philippine Performing Arts Guild performing the cultural dances of Singapore's four major races—Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian. It was amazing to watch this performance as we got a glimpse of Singapore's rich and colorful culture.

Several lucky guests took home fantastic giveaway items from STB-P. The top prizes were several air tickets to Singapore, ouch!

Members of the Singaporean community were in a riddle. Leading the pack were Singapore Ambassador Lim Bang Shan and Manjiet Properties Philippines country head Sin Mui Meng and vice president Ng Chin Pei. Also, there were representatives from the travel industry.

Fashion shoppers who met the minimum required amount of purchases got to spin the Uniquely Singapore wheel for a chance to win 20 free air tickets to the Lion City. Wow!

STB-P will bring the roadshow to other cities. It has been measuring the Singapore destination roadshows for three years now and the activity has been a huge success, palangga.

KEPPEL Properties Phils. country head Sin Wai Heng, STB-P area director for Philippines and Brunei Reuben Chang, IPM marketing communications group vice president Hilde Dizon, Singapore's Ambassador Lim Bang Hua and Keppel Properties Phils. vice president Ng Chin Pei

THE PODIUM matrimonial Stephen Tan

INFACT Hanz with son Jaguah pal Tim Yap

TAKING cinnamon on the groom, Airbus area sales director Lan Bastrom

GOLF aficionados Rudy Quimot, Steve Lim, Cumie Brung and Theodore de Jesus

CEREMONIAL tee-off by P&L president Jaime Bautista

DYESALL.com champion Stewart Go (center), P&L SVP Henry Sy Uy (left) and P&L president Jaime Bautista (right)

LIFESTYLE

Maternity fashion lays golden Egg

By Charito V. Moral

A New Zealand brand comes to birth-prone Philippines to make moms fashionably on the way

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: tiered-little two-piece swimsuit, P6,845. Cross-wrap, P4,960, and linen pants, P4,980. Silky top, P3,960. Cream fashion shirt, P3,990

WHEN CHARLOTTE Devereux, 33, got pregnant with her first child in 2001, she found herself in the same predicament as perhaps every fashionable, new mom-to-be: She had nothing nice to wear!

Devereux said her pre-pregnancy clothes had gotten too tight for her growing belly, yet she was still too small for typical maternity clothing. Moreover, the choices available to her native New Zealand fell much to be desired.

Devereux was distraught. There is no worse way to make a pregnant woman feel not sexy, after all, than by concealing her newfound curves under frumpy clothing.

Like a kangaroo

"I tried on the pair of pants with a pouch on the belly, and I looked like a kangaroo!" she recalled with a laugh.

"We get some giggles from that one," joined in her mom, Colyn Devereux-Kay.

Not long after, the sensitive daughter and her enterprising mom would hatch, well, Egg (for Emeranda for Growing Girls), a clothing line that covers all stages of a woman's pregnancy.

Devereux, who attended both **see and Boston schools**, designs for Egg; her mom, a businesswoman, runs it. Devereux later enjoyed wearing her stylish designs while heavy with her now 18-month-old second child.

"When you're pregnant you want comfort but you want to still look really good," noted Devereux-Kay. She and her daughter met with the local press recently to prepare for the launch of Egg's new boutiques. One is at Glorietta 4, in Makati, and the other, at the Mall of Asia in Pasay, which opens in March.

Devereux-Kay says her generation was lucky that, when they got pregnant with her son and daughter, empire-style dresses popularized by the model Twiggy were in vogue. "I never had the same problems as Charlotte's," she boasted.

Their own models

Seen then, the slim grandma proudly wears Egg's clothing today, including a black empire-cut blouse with sleeve cap sleeves for this interview. She swears by the clothes' comfort, especially the long, hand thighs. And there's no guessing she's in maternity wear.

Her daughter, who isn't pregnant, was also wearing a black empire-dress with bluish borders.

The woman who bought Egg to Manila was also in a black top and tie jacket from Egg's S/S 2006 collection. A mother of one, Rachel Joaquin-Madrid said she and husband Marvin plan to have more kids "and I want to make sure I'm dressed well." She added that the dresses got quicker about her clothes when she was pregnant, and she would always say she got them abroad.

The Madrids' company, Tradewind Imports and Distribution Inc., owns Egg's Philippine franchise. "We chose to bring in Egg because it has an all-wrap collection, from everyday wear to corporate and dressier occasions," the young mom explains.

High birth rate

The Devereux put up their first store in Auckland only three years ago, and now have 23 boutiques across New Zealand and Australia. It was named several times growing company in New Zealand last year.

Despite or affect to set up shop in different countries, they decided to take on the Philippines first because of the high birth rate here (about two million in 2004, according to Manila Madrid).

Owing to its mid-high price point (one will sell from P2,000-up; jeans P3,000-up; dresses P7,000-up), Egg's target market is only the Top 3 percent—still over three times higher than their entire New Zealand market, which has a 30,000 annual birth rate.

Devereux-Kay said she knew Egg would fit

ANGEL aqua dress, P7,600. Striped bandeau top, P4,460

CHARLOTTE Devereux, Rachel Joaquin-Madrid, Marvin G. Madrid, Colyn Devereux-Kay

OFF-WHITE, V-neck quarter-sleeve shrug with embroidery at the back and denim Tasha pants.
Camisole: pink top with belt and skinny floral skirt

Shapely Orientalia

PRINTED
brown,
tube top

BASIC-GREEN shrug

JAPANESE-INSPIRED FLORAL prints and wraparounds highlight the Orientalia Collection of Bo Me, the brand specially designed to suit the four body shapes of women.

Your figure may be an hourglass, or a triangle with shapely hips, a straight-looking rectangle like that of Naomi or Kate Moss, or an inverted triangle.

Whatever your shape is, you can definitely look sexy with the right fit and style details.

Orientalia is expressed in kimono-inspired **wraps mixed with fashionable** bolero and shrugs. Sunny floral prints and delicate embroidery provide a feminine touch to the collection.

An off-white quarter-sleeve shrug with a deep-V to neckline helps make a heavy upper body look lustrous. The embroidery at the back that cascades from the hem makes it more interesting. The basil-green shrug with a shirred chest area helps achieve a busty look, while a tie-around hem that wraps your torso provides a slimming effect on the waist.

A cinnamon pink top with bold dusty open-knit collar breaks the width of a heavy forearm to enhance the look of an inverted triangle figure. It has a removable belt that accentuates the waistline. The model look great paired with a printed A-line skinny floral skirt made with microfiber twill or a stretching Tasha jeans.

A wrap-animated brown tube top flows elegantly on the hourglass figure, while the accessorie's bandeau giving the illusion of wide hips. A casual boat-neck top with diagonal print on the body broadens the shoulder of the rectangle figure to give a more sexy silhouette.

For Bo stores are in SM North Edsa, SM Megamall, Robinsons Galleria, The Shops Greenhills, Alimall, SM San Lazaro, Market! Market!, Festival Mall, SM Southmall, SM Sucat, SM Dasmariñas, SM Baguio, SM Lucena, SM Pampanga, CSI Cacao and Ayala Cebu.

Maternity fashion lays golden egg

From page C1

the Filipino sensibility well. "I've been here a few times for other business. You have fantastic malls, you love to shop, and Filipino women are very stylish," she noted.

Egg has scaled down its sizing to include XS-small for the petite Filipina. The biggest size is XX-large). Its catalog says the range is "designed to take you from the first to the ninth month of birth and afterward." One skirt-dress style, in fact, can be worn five ways, three of which as a sexy dress even long after losing the baby weight.

Two collections

Egg comes out with two collections each year. Its mainstay consist of basics (fashionable) that can be mixed or matched. These include underwear, tank tops, shorts and long-sleeved tees and tops, pants, skirts, jeans, suit jacket, swimsuits—all in solid neutrals.

While her collections include several printed materials, Severeza prefers solid colors, mixing fabrics instead to add contrast to her designs. "Prints make pregnant women look bigger," she explains.

Apart from work wear, Egg also has the Designer range, which consists of dressy day to evening pieces.

In line with its expansion in the region, the label also launched a line called Egg for All Seasons. It makes use of "transitional fabrics," mostly cottons with Spandex or Lycra, flexible garments suited "for customers in subzero, as in the Philippines' case, air conditioned 'to doors. (Egg uses New Zealand's finest merino wool for winterwear, but Severeza has remodeled it may be too much for the tropical climate.) The waistbands of pants and skirts either have thick elastic bands or side zips with adjustable D-rings.

With Egg, future moms have something to look forward to besides the baby.

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JAEGER-LECOULTRE

LUCERNE

LIFESTYLE

BEAUTY

Getting gorgeous

Knowing what look works best for you means buying the makeup that will be of best use to you

WHEN I'M IN THE MALL checking out new products, I have a grand time educating myself. Things turn serious the minute I decide I must have a particular beauty item.

Of course, in order to really get to know the product and find out if it's worth writing about, a road test of sorts is required.

From a consumer's point of view, I suggest you pick what you think will be of most use. Or if it's worth the amount of money you're going to shell out, you should be able to use it at least once a week. Also the more versatile the better. A multipurpose product you can use for day or night is ideal.

Product integrity is to remember that makeup has a shelf life. It is not an investment, in the strictest sense of the word, although it may get you places, a new job or, with God's good graces, a new fab boyfriend. So, pick your beauty arsenal well.

Some are worth the price, like Lancôme's juicy tube, but others are really just an extravagance. If you have the cash, good for you. Unfortunately, not everybody is as blessed so choose wisely.

Another way to determine which products you need to try working with the look that works best for you. The amount of compliments you get when sporting a particular look is probably a good gauge. And if you have an asset that you want people to focus on, that's what you should play up. If you have great skin, for instance, the sheer, lo-mineral look would be great on you. Meanwhile, girls with great lips a la Angelina (she should have a good selection of lipsticks, including the smashing, ultra ah-ooh hot number.

Check out Avon for lip shades that give you real value for you hard-earned bucks. They have an array of fun colors that spread well.

When you are aware of which features you should play up, then focus on the makeup product you need to do just that. Shopping you ranks, and you bring home products that will be of better use to you.

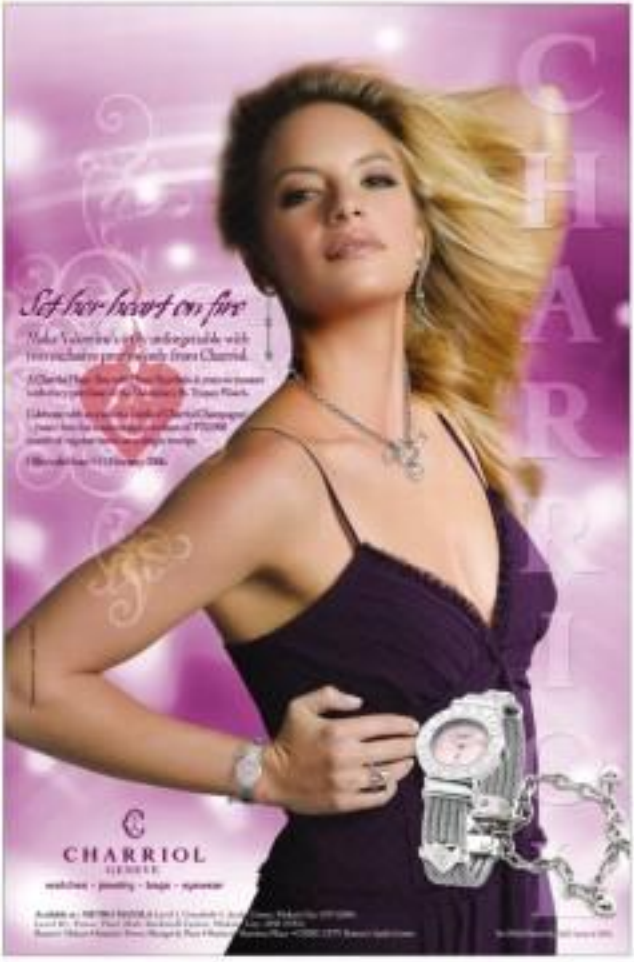
Let's learn from the beauty experts themselves. Professional makeup artists always just play up one feature, so determine yours and create the right balance and blending — these are the real secrets to great makeup.

Ria Francisco-Prieto

RYHANCE beautiful skin with liquid foundation. It will add glow and luminosity, and is best for dry skin since it mixes flaky skin bits. The perfect shade should match your skin without a mask. Test on skin before purchasing. Try Maybelline Clear Smooth Aqua Gel Foundation.

EDGE powder can be used all over the face if diluted lightly and on your eyes as an eye shadow. It is the easiest and fastest way to make your tanned skin glow. To show off your tan, dust all over your body, specifically on your shoulder blades and legs. Try Fashion 21.

GRAB attention with an amazing pout by using of the longest color in the spectrum—red. It takes approximately five seconds to apply the color, but it is the most alternative yet hardest look to sport. Low in maintenance, yet high in fashion value. Great red lips should be celebrated. Try Revlon, available at Rustan's.



Beautiful inside and out

GUERLAIN Orchidée Impériale

BEAUTIFUL INGREDIENTS: THESE MY breath away. It's true that it is what's inside that should count, but a tube or jar that can pass for jewelry on your dresser or in your purse obviously makes for a more attractive choice.

Guerlain's Orchidée Impériale range makes us believe in cosmetics.

Guerlain's research team discovered that an orchid's secret to looking eternally powered is in its roots. The team was then able to extract its essence and incorporate it into the cream.

What the product does is a reverse, or at the very least delay the aging process by strengthening the immune system of the skin. A failed immune system results in wrinkles, fine lines, age spots, large pores, dryness and inflammation in the form of skin rashes or breakouts.

For my road test, I used my regular cleanser and toner, then went straight to the Guerlain cream day and night. So used for a separate moisturizer or eye or eye cream, as the cream covers all.

With Guerlain, I found products that worked wonders and looked great in their jewel-like packaging

GUERLAIN Midnight Secret

The results? Before definition on my jaw line and cheekbones, and the cheeks didn't try eye area seemed plumper. Imperial was definitely maximized along with brown spots from old pimple marks and sun damage. I have oil oily T-zone, but the cream seemed to have balanced it out, as there were no breakouts.

My pores look smaller now, my cheeks are dewy and the eye area is smooth and supple. My look area and look of the hands, which are the first indicators of age, can compete with any teenager's, no kidding.

Cleansing Oil to Gel SET 80 ml (P4,650). A creamy vanilla-type scent that can be worn night and day due to its magnolia and citrus aromas. The actual notes are white, citrus honey, magnolia flower and jasmin leaves.

My advice is to wear this scent sparingly when you are alone with the guy you really love the best. It's that sensual. Do not use the fragrance on your arm and walk around for about 10 minutes before you decide to purchase. It helps to have an objective companion around to tell you if it works on you or not.

Aroma Midnight Secret 30 ml (P1,750). This is my favorite product in Guerlain's skin care line, as there is nothing like it. If you are planning a romantic getaway or if that guy you are eyeing will see you early in the morning after a night of sickness partying and deep deprivation, this is your secret weapon.

And what your face the night (or early morning) before bringing the mark, and apply three drops on the face. All you need is three hours' sleep and you will wake up looking fresh and blooming. Guaranteed.

Kiss Kiss Shine Shine Lipstick (P1,550). If you are the type who suffers from constantly dropped lips for lack of the greasy texture and shiny finish of gloss, who wishes for fuller lips or likes a sheer finish and wants the overall lip texture to improve long-term, then this lipstick is for you.

I couldn't resist the shade 666 Pink Shine for its deliciously sexy appeal. There are 21 shades, and they come in a dazzling array of gold metal case, all smelling like strawberry jam. My other favorite shades are Purple Shine, Red Shine, Mauve Shine and Chocolate Shine.

Guerlain makeup services are available at Philosophy (also by Mikaela tel) 813-6807). Guerlain products are readily available at Rustan's Makati and Ermes.

MAKEOVER 911

Kimmy Salas

GUERLAIN KissKiss Mini Shine in 666 Pink Shine

MAKEOVER OF MS LOUIE MONTELIBANO

Everlasting youth

AFTER Aging gracefully

THERE IS NO SUCH thing as age reversal. It's either you fight it or embrace it. You can exercise, eat right, apply all the expensive creams or, if you are really desperate, go under the knife.

But whatever you do, whatever you put on yourself, you will age anyway. Your skin gets thin, the tone fades and the lines start to appear.

Our model is 59 years old and has been using the same cream, make-up and look for the last 20 years. She's decided that now is the right time for a physical makeover before she hits the big 60 next year.

Her most noticeable problems are the thinness of her skin and the lines on her forehead.

Base—Our model has been using cake foundation for the longest time. I asked her to switch to liquid foundation, as it is better to look for a silicone-based, light-reflective foundation.

A good product to try is Youngblood Liquid Foundation. It is very sheer and has built-in moisturizer so dry skin will not flake and lines will be less noticeable.

Eyebrows—Her eyebrows have been overplucked and overarched. It gave the impression of her as someone stiff and cold.

I decided to thicken her eyebrows by filling in the spaces over with a brunette pencil. To avoid a artificial looking brows, I brushed it with a stiff brush using Mac Eyebrow Pencil in Brunette.

Eyes—Her eyes are somewhat droopy due to the loose skin. It is also wrinkled and discolored. Before I applied eyeshadow, I prepped the skin around the eye area with eye cream. Do not apply too much, as this will cause the eyeshadow to crease. I used a deep coppery brown eyeshadow on the eyelid and a golden apricot shadow on the crease.

BEFORE

Eyeliner and mascara are very important. I used a gray-black eyeliner to accentuate the drooping eyelids and brushed two coats of mascara also in black. I used Maybelline lines liner in Black and Maybelline Great Lash Mascara in Black.

Blush—I used Bourjois Spotlight for cheeks to give her that young, youthful glow. It is also light reflective, that's why it gives the illusion of a positive and youthful look.

I couldn't resist the shade 666 Pink Shine for its deliciously sexy appeal. There are 21 shades, and they come in a dazzling array of gold metal case, all smelling like strawberry jam. My other favorite shades are Purple Shine, Red Shine, Mauve Shine and Chocolate Shine.

Guerlain makeup services are available at Philosophy (also by Mikaela tel) 813-6807). Guerlain products are readily available at Rustan's Makati and Ermes.

Lips—I used a cream-base lipstick (Revlon Moisture Lipstick) and topped it off with lip gloss for that dewy effect. Avoid using lip liner, as this will only emphasize the lines around the lip area.

Hair—He gave our model full bangs and subsequently cut dark brown to cover the grayish roots. The color she warmed up her skin tone and made it appear healthier and glowing. The bangs covered the lines on her forehead and gave her that dignified yet youthful look.

I believe the secret to everlasting youth is all in our mind. We should learn to relax and let go. What appears on the outside is a reflection of what are really feel on the inside.

Chill, relax and you will see your skin and face soften.

LIFESTYLE

Contributing editors
Ingrid Marie Gallardo
and Jane Esperon

FASHION

an affair to remember

A PROM SPECIAL

ON HER: dress by Puey Quinones (09 to 11/2006); earrings from Mercedita, Power Plaza; clutching from Penny, Greenhills; 3 bracelets Photo shoot; P1,250 and pink bo, P1,950; boots by Springfield, Greenbelt 3; jeans by Diesel, Glorietta; green belt by Diesel, Power Plaza

Confessions of a prom queen wannabe

IF I HAD THE POWER to change one defining sartorial moment in my life, it would be prom night and the overdone meringue of a dress I wore.

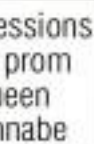
Okay, okay, so it was the '80s and we were allowed to be over the top in a "Dynasty" sort of way (hmmm, I wonder if younger readers even get this reference?). But that doesn't make me feel any better.

I can't help but cringe when I see old photos of a cute (very fashion-savvy me) in my white and peach confection—complete with dyed-to-match pouch, ex, salmon pumps and wrist corsage!

I was no prom queen, but in the tradition of "Tapped," a cheesy prom movie from, you guessed it, the '80s, I would have really enjoyed wearing that skimpy little dress!

So, readers out there who are about to attend their proms or graduation balls, do take heed. Whatever you choose to wear now can

CONFESSIONS D2



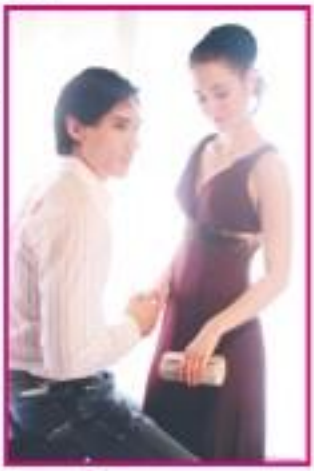
APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadiwani

D.I.Y.
Canon
Delighting You Always
Yin + Yang

DRESS by Rhea Kate (09177239922); jewelry by Jol B. Disen; shoes by SCBG Girls, P1,999, CHG, Glorietta; bag by Mom.ai Shangri-la Plaza

Girls, take heed: What you wear on prom night may haunt you for the rest of your fashionable lives



DRESS by Alex Narag (0928 9110331); necklace from Mercedes, bag by Firma. Denims white shirt by Tru Vautit; jeans by Diesel; belt by Diesel

DRESS by Rosalie Rosales (09177239922); jewelry by Jol B. Disen, Manila Peninsula Hotel

Confessions of a prom queen wannabe

From page D1

future you the rest of your fashionable lives!

What's a girl to do, right? Well, start off by discussing options with your parents. Whether you like it or not, they are paying for your dress so you must take budget into consideration.

Once you've done that, you can actually start choosing a design that suits your personality and body type. Remember, it's important to be ultra-comfortable in whatever it is you opt to wear. That's one way to ensure that you enjoy your prom experience.

If you are on a strict budget, check out the **different retail or department stores for pretty** prom frocks. The only problem with this is **you run the risk of bumping into someone** wearing the same dress.

Another option would be to go to a "couture" to have a particular design copied.

Of course, if the budget permits, it's a **good** treat to go to a designer of your choice to have **something really special made. The designer** can even help you choose accessories to complete your look and make you stand out even more.

There are countless prom dresses to choose from nowadays, so there really is no excuse to look less than your prom queen best. Ten or 20 years from now, you should be able to look at your photos with a smile—of pleasure, not sarcastic horror.

Now, if only I could go back in time, I would definitely grab any of those fabulous frocks and change the course of history. Miss, anyway!

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DRESS by Jun Escario (09194193354); jewelry by Jol B. Disen; shoes by Lanvin, P1,999, CHG, Glorietta

Flower schoolgirl

CHIFFON dress and matching bag, Kate Torralba (#906-3499016); purple sandals, Soho

STRIPED dress and matching bag, Kate Torralba necklace, Soho

TIERED jersey dress, House of Kipu; necklace and shoes, Soho; bag, Kate Torralba

SATIN dress, Paula Bustamante (901-1-07755T); shoes, Schu; pearl necklaces (used as a bracelet), Ensemble

designer

FLORAL printed dress, P1,895.30; pearls, Ensemble; shoes, Penny Fit

VINTAGE pink lace dress, P1,295, Mama's Room (0911-5068948); necklace, Happy David

PEACH dress with beading, P1,195, Kamiseta; copper necklace and shoes, Soho

PINK corset and frilly skirt, 22.8C; purse, Kate Torralba necklace, Happy David

retail

Picture-perfect princess frocks

By Bianca Caronongan

MANY HIGH-SCHOOL girls, the moment they step into the campus as freshmen, look forward to their prom; others, however, don't like the fuss and flippery of it all. Still, most girls do go for the experience: after all, isn't the prom the center of nearly all high school-themed movies?

However, high-school movie never show how hard it is to find the dress of the night. More often than not, they just waltz into the ballroom, resplendent in glowering gowns and pretty corsages [with the good-looking date, of course].

But the search for the perfect prom gown is often more grief than glamour, especially since most shops are out to rush guests.

Much for shoe? Search only. Ditch the stiletto and spaghetti-strapped dress with a pouch-shaped and look for something that's comfy-yet-pretty.

You could be a glamorous drama queen, or the sweet girl next door, or the rebellious edgy cookie chick. But always keep in mind that comfort is key. Don't be overly trendy. Or you, don't want to cringe at your photos 10 years from now). And remember that accessories are vital to personalizing your dress.

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Rebel rocker

SEQUINED gold top, Louis Clyporis (#921-9758416); linen shirt, P690, Kamiseta; gold cuff and earrings, Happy David

PURPLE multi-way Cosmo dress, Kate Torralba necklace, Happy David

CANDY-COLORED top, Kate Torralba necklace, Happy David

H&M dress with bolero and sequined collar, Tina Navarro (0920-924 6886); rainbow bag, Kate Torralba; pink jean ensemble pumps, Penny Fit

designer

LEOPARD print dress, P995, Kamiseta; necklace, Happy David; black velour sandals, Soho

SILVER velvet dress, P1,295, Kamiseta; necklace and bracelet, Soho; black open-toed pumps, Penny Fit

VELVET dress, Freeway; cropped jacket, Hope Face; pearls, Ensemble; flats, Penny Fit

PLEATED dress, P1,495, Vintage by Cinderella; necklace, Happy David; yellow-green shoes, Penny Fit

retail

Beau of the ball

By Rina Y. Vergara

DRESSING UP ON PROM night has always been serious business for girls. Most boys are simply content to borrow ill-fitting suits that belonged either to Dad or Big Brother. As far as old movies go, what usually concerned boys was the post-party scenario.

But in the thought. Of course, boys will always be boys. Giving the girls' chaperone fits only hours before the last dance ends and spending precious moments alone with their objects of affection will always be on top of their agenda. These days, however, they also want to go through such a rite of passage in style.

"In essence as here you, almost all my clients were girls," says fashion designer Joey Inocencio. "This time, however, I'm attending to an equal number of boys."

And most of these won't settle for the usual suit. Some even came in Inocencio's shop armed with the latest issue of a glossy men's magazine featuring one of his works. Most of them wanted him to do a similar grey wool number with an exaggerated collar.

That's probably one reason fashion-forward boys are now going to designers. Unlike most youngsters their age, they don't rush, scribe anywhere to the local mainstay. Looking even remotely like the next guy, especially if he's a rival to s-he maiden's heart, is a big no-no.

After years of wearing jeans," says fashion designer Nono Palmos, "young men are starting to realize that there's glamour and power in wearing a well-made suit or a luxurious pair of loafers."

Going for a sleek and streamlined wardrobe, he says, is a mere extension of men's (and boys') current fascination with equally stylish and expensive "toys for the big boys" such as plasma TVs, luxury watches and roadsters.

And based on fashion designer Randy Ortiz's experience, most boys nowadays have a clear idea of what they want.

"It's still the parents, of course, who foot the bill," he says. "Most of the time, however, it's their sons who ultimately call the shots as to what to wear. Just like girls, boys also like to catch attention, albeit in more subtle ways."

That doesn't rule out, however, the possibility of snagging the right prom outfit in a department store or shop featuring name-produced labels. Half the number of suits featured in this photo shoot, for instance, were sourced from the likes of Anthony Nocum for SM, Rico Salandanan for The Landmark, Zara and Van Heusen.

Nocum and his colleagues just promises us. Ps. "Apart from buying a nice formal white dress shirt, those who aren't used to wearing suits should stick to classic cuts in solid colors such as black and navy blue," says nocum.

Indeed, it always pays to dress up impeccably as your mom might even if your mind is wandering off elsewhere, a boy may not always get the girl to say yes, but years from now, he can at least take comfort in the fact that he looked and felt his best while trying.

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SOLANIPRESS trouser vest and pants with groove in detailed cuff, polo shirt and sleeveless cut, all from Randy Ortiz (02-9238372); Plumb, black shoes, P2,495

PINSTRIPED jacket, P4,990, navy blue pants (joined with t-cut), P1,990, olive green shirt, P1,290, all from Van Heusen; striped shirt (in front) Anthony Nocum

BLACK wool crepe blazer and pants, with white polo shirt, satin vest and necktie set, all from Nono Palmos (02-8331426); Caterham Air White Monotone black shoes (with cathlide sole Nike Air Technology, P15,990

ON HANGER: charcoal gray single-breasted 2-button half-lined jacket, P1,295.75, lea-front pants, P690.75, bright pink stretch convertible collar long-sleeved shirt, P699.75, all from Anthony Nocum; black belt, P690; On Alex: black jacket, P2,400, black pants, P795, white shirt, P630, all from Rico Salandanan at The Landmark; Plumb black belt, P595; The Landmark black necktie, P290.

ON HANGER: [illegible] blue suit, blue gray polo shirt and V-neck shirt and, all from Joey Inocencio (0918-9033331); Hand-[illegible] [illegible] shoes; P2,495; On Alex: Slim-cutting [illegible] white-wing collar shirt in pure Italian [illegible] flat-front and [illegible] all from Miguel Lorenzo (02-8123169); [illegible] [illegible] pure Italian [illegible] Colorgal Air [illegible] Wing Oxford [illegible] shoes, P11,000

IN TOP PROM

IT TAKES MORE THAN THE RIGHT SUIT TO make or break an entire look. Apart from the all-important fit, designers Anthony Nocum, Joey Inocencio, Nono Palmos and Randy Ortiz offer a number of practical tips to this year's bunch of prom boys:

- A good pair of well-shined black leather shoes is a safe bet. Leather shoes (no matter what color) with dark rubber soles a la Ben Sherman's have no place in the ballroom.
- Mickey Mouse belongs to Disneyland. While, sure, silk cravats are fetching cartoon characters as well as thin striped, office variety are our way. Plain, slim ties are currently the rage.
- What color should be wear? When in doubt, stick to tried-and-tested solors and tones. Guys who have had more practice before the big night can easily mix-and-match bolders to-ether. Think flamboyant's periwinkle suit, especially if they feel they can pull it off.
- Regardless of the design, the suit should be snug yet comfortable to enable the wearer to make certain moves on the dance floor.
- The suit's material is worth as important as its fit. Don't scrimp on the fabric because that's the foundation of any well-made suit. Strongly take into the weight, body and volume of your outfit.
- Get a haircut a week or so before the event and not on the very day itself.
- It's important to look clean-cut, dapper and young. Apart from being fraught with risks, borrowing a suit from Dad or Big Brother ruins the entire experience of teaching a boy to dress up like a fine, young man.

BLACK jacket, P4,950, checkered polo shirt, P2,488, slim-pin striped pants, P4,950, and gray sneakers, P1,950, all from Zara Man, Rockwell; Van Heusen reversible belt, P1,295; painted skateboard by FAMO

Fashion FLASH

KEY-HOLDER in cross-leather and calfskin (St. Draper), P13,500

Shoe stoppers and T-bags

WEDGE calfskin sandals (Coppa Sandals), P13,500

By Cheche V. Marzi

TODD'S HAS TAKEN VERY audacious moves this season.

The Italian luxury goods firm is introducing its first apparel collection this spring. It's designed by Derek Lam. And while Tod's ambassadors in the Philippines won't be wearing Lam's limited-edition collection in Tod's Greenbelt 4 boutique, they will be happy to find limited-edition bags and footwear, including the famed Gommino moccs, sporting prints by popular illustrator and New Yorker fashion editor Michael Roberts.

Collaboration with artists has been a strong trend with luxury brands of late, and even for the very traditional Tod's, which is no stranger to the Gommino driving moccasins, is no exception.

Tod's, however, isn't wasting too far from tradition. In fact, it looks to its roots even with Roberts' prints. The artist fashions the signature moccs into robot hooks (here, well, sipped or toothed and a once-cat Cheshi).

Previewed before the Asian press in November at the Hong Kong headquarters with the rest of Tod's F/W 2006 collection, the prints appears in a couple of ladies' bags, a ladies' moccs, and even in a Degas dress. Tod's popular ballerina flat. The illustrations are in black on a white background for the leather pieces; the two canvas-and-leather bags with rope details sport white and pale blue prints.

Tod's F/W 2006 collection will be available in late March. Stores Specialists Inc. exclusively distributes it in the Philippines.

Unlike in the previous spring, when Tod's made use of every imaginable color, the new pieces are predominantly in grays, yellow, white, gold and brandy. It employs the trademark brown suit leathers in both bags and footwear, some mixed with canvas.

Tod's bags are as pretty as they can get, though perhaps not so easily recognizable as pieces from other much-publicized labels. Tod's strength is in owner-king and updating the classics—no bold displays of logos, though the label has notably used the rubber pebbles in accent bag designs. But this doesn't seem to hurt the Tod's image.

The leather house's Gommino moccs, sporting prints by popular illustrator and New Yorker fashion editor Michael Roberts, are now in Manila

BLUE shoulder bag in smooth calfskin with stitching details (Benji Patiño Infiltrators), P81,500

SHOPPER bag in fabric with grain leather trim (Bloomingdale's The Little Phoebe), P54,500

HOPPY bamboo leather (Charles Keith), P13,500

LADIES' Gommino calfskin moccs in Michael Roberts print (Rustan's Cendrys), P22,500

PEEP-TOE sandals with stacked heels in calfskin and nylon (Coppa Sandals), P13,500

Hollywood patrons

Tod's is patronized by Hollywood's A-list—Gwyneth Paltrow and Jennifer Lopez, among countless others, have all been photographed toting their Tod's. The owner, perhaps, to the brand's emphasis on function as much as looks. Even paparazzi's hounded celebs affect all, cool pieces that don't only look good but serve their purpose.

The new Benji bag sports multiple pockets, and it's practical so to a bit, it has a more busy design, with two front flaps with metal closures, and contrast stitchings. A sling pochette (here), with a sequined version for the evening, is expected to delight younger customers.

There's the shopper (here/page, with canvas and leather and floral fabric and calfskin versalle calfskin underskin or embellished with patterns. Tod's also comes out with an oversized, busy version of its popular zippered bag (Bilig in answer to one of spring's hot trends.

The Gommino appears in chic shoe in suede or patent leather with contrast stitching. Apart from the Degas with gathered ribbon soles (a sweeter look is acquired), the label remains to flats into peep-toes or cut-away soles, some in metallic skin. There're all accented with rubber pebbles, including the sexy peep-toe, nylon-and-calfskin styles with three-inch stacked heels. The wedge-heeled sandals come in ribbon patent leather, or canvas with leather.

An alternative to the ultra-comfy Gommino is a sporty jelly-rubber sandal style with crisscross elastic soles.

The men's collection is very sports-ready the most sporting elastics and striped bands, zippered eyelets, in suede and nylon. The basic-yet-versatile comes in calfskin or calfskin-another look comes in a three-tone combo. There are both rounded and studded city loafers, and leather flip flops.

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